

SIR HUDSON LOWE  
AND NAPOLEON

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R. C. SEATON



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SIR HUDSON LOWE

*(From a Pencil Drawing in possession of his Daughter)*



# SIR HUDSON LOWE AND NAPOLEON

BY

R. C. SEATON

11



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## PREFACE

*The following pages contain some matter hitherto unpublished. \* Miss C. M. S. Lowe, the only surviving daughter of Sir Hudson Lowe, has also kindly allowed me the use of a few letters and other documents. The portrait of Sir Hudson Lowe is from a pencil drawing, in the possession of Miss Lowe, made in 1832.*

R. C. S.



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# Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon

## CHAPTER I

### THE QUESTION STATED

THE character and career of Napoleon form a subject of perennial interest. He has already taken his place beside Mary of Scotland and Oliver Cromwell, and some other historical personages about whom, after all is said, the most diverse opinions are held. But we never get to the end of Napoleon. Fresh volumes about his life or portions of it are continually appearing. Not long ago we had from the practised hand of Mr. T. P.

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O'Connor a book exhibiting Napoleon from many different points of view, both of friends and of enemies. A little earlier came *Napoléon et les Femmes* from M. Frédéric Masson, a professed worshipper. Mr. Baring-Gould has lately brought out a new *Life*, and the monumental work of Professor Sloane is just completed. No apology therefore is necessary for an attempt to clear the character of one whose name is indissolubly connected with the closing scenes of the Emperor's life, of one who has been so maligned and calumniated that his name has become a byword for peevishness of temper, coarseness of language, and petty persecution. It is scarcely necessary to say that I refer to Sir Hudson Lowe, the Governor of St. Helena during Napoleon's captivity. French national pride has made it a point of patriotism to cling to charges long after they have been disproved, but



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something different might have been expected from ourselves. Sir Hudson Lowe makes no demand on our generosity; he claims only justice, and it is hard that now that he has been more than half a century in his grave this claim should not be accorded to his memory. Soon after the death of Napoleon, a small but noisy group, aided by political interest, party spite, and the specious statements of a lying book, captured the ear of the public to listen to their version of the treatment of the Emperor at St. Helena, and they have more or less kept it ever since. A few months before the death of Sir Hudson Lowe a writer in the *United Service Magazine*, in October 1843, thus expressed himself: "So complete a reaction has taken place, in this country at least, that it may now be doubted whether any man of information and reflection can be found to countenance opinions unfavourable to

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Sir Hudson Lowe." There are, however, a good many such to be found even now. No man, it is true, "of information and reflection," much less an historian, ought to entertain such opinions, but there is considerable excuse to be made for the British public. When people have once had it instilled into their mind that some atrocious deeds have been done, they do not rest content (and all honour to them for the feeling) till they have seen punishment inflicted for the wrongdoing. But they are not so careful about getting hold of the real culprit. If they make some one serve as an expiatory sacrifice their virtue is apt to be satisfied. This was the case here. They first admitted without sufficient ground that Napoleon had been ill-used, and then, finding it was possible to make a victim of Sir Hudson Lowe, they promptly sent him into the wilderness to bear the sins of the British Govern-

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ment as well as his own, both equally imaginary. There is little similarity between Sir Hudson Lowe and Lord Byron, yet they have this in common, that both, though for very different reasons, have been made scapegoats to save the character of the nation. Byron was offered up to vindicate our domestic virtue, Sir Hudson Lowe to expiate our supposed sins against Napoleon. There is also the difference that Byron was guilty, while Sir Hudson Lowe was innocent ; but of both the remark of Macaulay on Byron holds good : "He is a sort of whipping-boy, by whose vicarious agonies all the other transgressors of the same class are, it is supposed, sufficiently chastised. . . At length our anger is satisfied. Our victim is ruined and heartbroken. And our virtue goes quietly to sleep for seven years more." Not only the public ear but also the literature of the day, and more

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especially that of France, became so saturated with the notion of Napoleon as a victim to the petty malevolence of his so-called "jailer" and "executioner" that people almost forgot there was another side to the question. And they had the good excuse that Sir Hudson Lowe himself had never spoken out when he might have done so with effect: a fatal mistake for which he paid the penalty to the day of his death. The reason why he thus acted will be dealt with later on. It was not till the publication of the *History of the Captivity of Napoleon at St. Helena*, by the late Mr. William Forsyth, Q.C., nine years after the death of Sir Hudson Lowe, that a full statement was made on the other side. His character is there completely vindicated, it is true, but it is also completely buried. It is unreasonable to expect the average reader to work his way through three thick volumes

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weighted with numerous official documents. The materials are only too ample, the vindication is only too complete. What was wanted was a small book setting out the salient facts in reasonable compass. The three volumes, though admirably written, are rather a storehouse from which the necessary proofs may be drawn. It is true the book has made a certain impression on the public. It is no longer possible to speak of Sir Hudson Lowe with the same licence of abuse as was heard previously ; but, while it is allowed that "he was not a bad man," he is still charged with harshness of temper, want of courtesy, violence of language and vacillation of purpose. But, if Forsyth's book had made the impression that it ought to have made, it would have been impossible for a respectable firm to have republished, even with certain omissions, O'Meara's *A Voice from St. Helena*. I

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have been speaking of the public only. For the professed student or the historian, after Forsyth's book, to persist in offensive charges against Sir Hudson Lowe is scarcely creditable. It may be admitted that he was occasionally wanting in tact, but with that exception the charges that are still made against him show either that certain writers have not read Forsyth's book with sufficient care, or that they have closed their eyes to the plainest evidence. More than forty years ago Mr. Forsyth wrote: "The historian has charged him (Sir Hudson Lowe) with meanness and cruelty, and the satirist has turned him into ridicule. He has been painted as a man whose conduct and language befitted the turnkey of a gaol rather than a British officer intrusted with the execution of a duty of unparalleled delicacy and importance. And even those who have duly estimated the difficulty of his task, and

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suspected the veracity of his assailants, have been unable to divest themselves of an uneasy consciousness that he might have performed his duty in a more gracious manner. The tone of their defence has been rather that of apology than vindication. And for this I cannot but think that Sir Hudson has himself been in some degree to blame. When we consider the ample materials he possessed for refuting his enemies and putting the libellers to shame, we cannot but marvel that he should have allowed the grave to close over him without having published his defence to the world."\* These words are almost as true now as when they were written. One honourable exception must be made in favour of the writer of the notice on Sir Hudson Lowe in the *Dictionary of National*

\* *History of the Captivity of Napoleon at St. Helena*, i. 122, 123.

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*Biography.* He has done justice to the good intentions and excellent performance of duty by the Governor of St. Helena.

One French writer — Lamartine — has had the good sense and moral courage to run counter to the prepossessions of his fellow-countrymen in the following remarkable words: “In reading with attention the correspondence and notes exchanged on every pretext between the attendants on Napoleon and Sir Hudson Lowe, one is confounded at the insults, the provocations, and the invectives with which the captive and his friends outraged the Governor at every turn. Napoleon at that time sought to excite by cries of pain the pity of the English Parliament, and to furnish a grievance to the speakers of the opposition against the Ministry, in order to obtain a removal nearer to Europe. The desire of provoking insults by insult,



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and of afterwards exhibiting these insults as crimes to the indignation of the Continent is plainly evident in all these letters." \*

In days past Sir Hudson Lowe has been, as Forsyth puts it, a *bête-noire* of the French imagination; but Truth, it is said, is the daughter of Time, and I have written the following pages in the hope that the fair-minded Frenchman and the average Englishman may now be disposed to regard the events at St. Helena in the dry light of historical fact. In any case, to do justice to the memory of Sir Hudson Lowe can cast no aspersion on the reputation of Napoleon.

\* *Histoire de la Restauration*, vi. 416.

## CHAPTER II

### BEFORE ST. HELENA

HUDSON LOWE, only son of John Hudson Lowe, surgeon of the 50th Regiment of Foot, was born at Galway in 1769, a year remarkable for the birth of Napoleon himself and several others connected with his history. The Duke of Wellington, Marshals Ney and Soult, and Lord Castlereagh were all born in this year. He was educated at Salisbury School, and in the eighteenth year of his age received a commission in the regiment of which his father was still surgeon. At this time it was stationed at Gibraltar, and there young Hudson Lowe remained till 1792. He now obtained

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leave of absence and travelled through Italy, which gave him the opportunity of acquiring a thorough knowledge of Italian—a knowledge which was of much use to him in after life. To this he afterwards added Spanish and Portuguese. His first service was on the expedition to Corsica under Sir David Dundas. In 1795 he received a Captain's commission and was appointed Deputy Judge-Advocate in Elba. Next he served in Portugal under Sir C. Stuart, and was sent to Minorca to take charge of a corps of Corsicans then being raised. Captain Lowe took part in the Egyptian Expedition, and, with the temporary rank of Major, commanded the Corsicans from Minorca who formed part of the reserve under Sir John Moore. "The vigilance and method with which he conducted outpost duty," says the writer of the Memoir of Sir Hudson Lowe in the *United Service*

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*Magazine*,\* “was conspicuous and procured a pointed eulogium from General Moore. ‘Lowe,’ were his words, ‘when you’re at the outposts I always feel sure of a good night’s rest.’” Of the Corsican corps and its commander, Sir Robert Wilson writes as follows in his *History of the British Expedition to Egypt*: “This corps in every action, and especially in the landing, distinguished itself particularly, and Major Lowe, who commanded it, gained always the highest approbation. Indeed, it was a corps which from its conduct and appearance excited general admiration, and did honour to the nation of the First Consul of France.”

After the peace of Amiens Major Lowe was appointed to the 7th Fusiliers, and shortly afterwards one of the permanent Assistant Quartermasters-General. General Sir John Moore remained his

\* April 1844, p. 593.

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firm friend, and as it is rightly considered a distinction *laudari a laudato viro*, to be praised by one whom others praise, one of several letters to Major Lowe may be quoted here:—

“CHATHAM, 21st April, 1802.

“MY DEAR LOWE,—I congratulate you most sincerely on your appointment to the Fusiliers. It is nothing more than you well deserve; and if I have been at all instrumental in bringing it about I shall think the better of myself for it. I hope before we leave that the Fusiliers will be at home, and in a way to be actively employed. I trust you will always consider me as a person warmly interested in your welfare, and that you will let me hear from you occasionally; and if duty or pleasure bring you near me, now or hereafter, you may depend upon the best reception I can give.—Believe me, very sincerely and faithfully,

“JOHN MOORE.”

When the peace proved to be hollow, Major Lowe was selected by the Government, in July 1803, to proceed on a secret mission to Portugal in order to inspect the

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troops and fortresses along the frontier, and report on the practicability of defending the country by united British and Portuguese forces. On the termination of this mission he was employed to raise the regiment of Royal Corsican Rangers, of which he was appointed Lieut.-Col. Commandant, and, taking part in the expedition to Naples under Sir James Craig, made frequent journeys to Naples and Sicily. In June 1806 Lowe was placed by Sir John Stuart (who had succeeded Sir James Craig) in command of the island of Capri, which had lately been captured by Sir Sidney Smith. Here he remained with five companies of the Corsican Rangers as a garrison, which was subsequently strengthened by the remainder of the Corsicans and the Maltese regiment. Soon after his arrival at Capri, Colonel Lowe showed his humanity by addressing a letter of remonstrance to General Berthier,

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then chief of the staff of the French army in Naples, in which he appealed to him to put a stop to the numerous military executions in Calabria. For more than two years Colonel Lowe was Governor at Capri, until, in October 1808, the island was attacked by a powerful French naval and military expedition from Naples, and, after a siege of thirteen days, compelled to surrender, chiefly owing to the misconduct of the Maltese regiment and the want of naval assistance. Colonel Lowe, however, refused to come to any other terms than those of a free evacuation with arms and baggage—terms which were after some difficulty accorded. It is true that Sir William Napier, in his *History of the Peninsular War*, says that it was at Capri “Sir Hudson Lowe first became known to history, by losing in a few days a post that, without any pretensions to ability, might have been defended for as many years.”

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We cannot be surprised that the enemies of Sir Hudson Lowe have eagerly seized on this unfortunate remark of the illustrious historian, for unfortunate and unjust it is, and it is a sufficient reply to say that officers at the time and near the spot, who had every opportunity of judging, expressed a very different opinion. Thus, Major-General Lord Forbes wrote to Colonel Lowe: "I am convinced that Sir John Stuart will take an early opportunity of expressing to you, as well as to the public, the sense he entertains of the unremitting zeal, ability, and judgment which your conduct has displayed under your late trying circumstances at Capri," and Sir John Stuart himself, the Commander-in-Chief, wrote: "I am happy to express my perfect satisfaction at your own able, gallant, and judicious conduct, as well as at the zealous and animated support which you acknowledge to have received from your officers



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and those brave soldiers who adhered to and returned with you hither in the defence of the town of Capri : a point which, after your first most unexpected and unaccountable disaster at Ana Capri, could scarcely any longer be regarded as a military post." It has also been represented that the garrison consisted of 2000 men and the French assailants of 1200 ; the fact being that the garrison, exclusive of officers, was 1361 men, while the French were between 3000 and 4000.

In 1809, under the chief command of Sir John Stuart, Colonel Lowe with his Corsicans formed part of the force that captured the islands of Ischia and Procida, and Lowe made the capitulation of Ischia with the French general, by which the garrison was forced to surrender as prisoners of war. In the same year Colonel Lowe was appointed second in command on the expedition to the Ionian

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Isles, and conducted the landing on Zante, after which Cephalonia and Cerigo surrendered. General Oswald, who was in command of the military forces, appointed Lowe to be Governor in Cephalonia, "certain that so delicate a trust could not be reposed in more able hands."\* He continued to administer the civil government of Cephalonia, with which Ithaca was soon afterwards united, during the end of 1809 and the beginning of 1810. Colonel Lowe then urged on General Oswald the advisability of securing the island of Santa Maura, which contained a strong fortress and was in immediate proximity to the coast. The expedition was successfully carried out and Colonel Lowe was thanked three times in the public despatches. The island of Santa Maura was then added to the civil government of Cephalonia and Ithaca, and for two years Colonel Lowe

\* Despatch, October 5, 1809.

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administered it without special remuneration. He prepared a report on the island for the Colonial Office, and on his departure was presented by the grateful inhabitants with an address of thanks and a gold sabre. Lowe returned home in February, 1812, on leave, having lately obtained the rank of full colonel. He says : "I was then in my twenty-fourth year of service, and had never been absent a single day from my public duty since the commencement of the war in 1793. I had been in England only once during that time, and then only for a period of six months during the peace of Amiens."

Colonel Lowe was already known to Government as an active, vigilant, and trustworthy officer, especially fitted for foreign missions on account of his knowledge of languages, when at the beginning of 1813 he was appointed to a position in which his talents could be displayed on a

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larger scale. In January he was sent on a secret mission to the north of Europe to inspect the Russian-German legion, a body raised principally from the deserters and prisoners of the contingents impressed by Napoleon into his Russian campaign. Lowe went first to Sweden and saw Bernadotte, then Prince Royal, at Stockholm. From here he crossed the Gulf of Bothnia on the ice, and joined Lord Cathcart, the British Ambassador to Russia, at the Emperor Alexander's headquarters at Kalisch in Poland, where he quite won the confidence of that monarch. In May he joined the headquarters of the Allies and was present at the battle of Bautzen, on which occasion he had his first view of Napoleon. Lowe was next ordered to inspect the whole of the Hanoverian and German forces in British pay, and was sent by Lieutenant-General Lord Stewart to join the Russian and Prussian army under

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Field-Marshal Blücher. Thus he happened to be present at the battle of Leipsic. Next he was summoned for another tour of inspection in the north of Germany, and in January 1814 ordered to rejoin Blücher's army during the campaign in France. As the only English officer of rank with this army, Colonel Lowe's position was one of great importance and responsibility, and General Stewart compliments him on the clearness and detailed nature of his despatches. In this capacity he was present with the Prussian army in thirteen general engagements. When the fighting was over Colonel Lowe was the officer selected to bring to England the news of the abdication of Napoleon and capitulation of Paris, for which service he received the honour of knighthood. The Prussian Order of Military Merit followed him home, and on his return to Paris the Emperor Alexander conferred on him the

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Russian Order of St. George. He was also made a K.C.B. and promoted in June to the rank of Major-General. During the summer General Lowe was appointed Quartermaster-General of the army in the Netherlands, and was required to inspect and report on the state of the fortresses to be established as a barrier against France. Colonel Basil Jackson—afterwards an intimate friend of Sir Hudson Lowe and at this time a very young officer on the Staff—thus speaks of his first acquaintance with him: “About this time Sir Hudson Lowe was appointed Quartermaster-General, succeeding Colonel, afterwards Lord, Cathcart. . . . His successor proved to be all we could desire, as an active, diligent, and accomplished officer, who not only worked hard himself but also kept his officers on the alert, evincing towards them at the same time the utmost considera-

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tion.”\* In September, Sir Hudson Lowe had occasion to write to General Count Gneisenau, the chief of Blücher’s Staff, an officer whose admirable talents are too well known to need any encomium. Count Gneisenau had long been a warm friend of Sir Hudson Lowe, and in his reply begins with the following strong expressions of regard—the original is in French : “ It is with the greatest satisfaction, my very dear and honoured General, that I have received your letter of the 15th of September, which tells me that you have still preserved the remembrance of a man who is infinitely attached to you, and who in the course of a memorable campaign, if there ever were one, has learnt to appreciate your rare military talents, your profound judgment on the great operations of war, and your imperturbable *sang-froid* in the day of battle. These rare qualities and your

\* *Waterloo and St. Helena*, p. 7.

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honourable character will link me to you eternally.” Again, if I may anticipate a little, I am tempted to quote a passage from a letter by the same writer to Sir Hudson at St. Helena, in October 1817, which well expresses the general confidence felt on the Continent in the vigilance of the Governor—I translate again from the French : “Thousands of times have I carried my thoughts over that vast ocean solitude to that interesting rock on which you are the guardian of the public repose of Europe. On your vigilance and on your force of character depends our safety ; if you were to relax your rigorous care against the wildest villain in the world,\* if you were to allow your subordinates to grant him any favours through a mistaken pity, our repose would be compromised, and honest folks in Europe would be a prey to their old anxiety. I have often

\* *Le plus rusé scélérat du monde.*



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been questioned on this point—I who was known to have the honour of your acquaintance—and I always replied that I could guarantee your loyalty, your sagacity, and your vigilance. The most devoted of your friends, I am so deeply interested in your well being that I beg you across the sea to have the goodness to give me news of your health, your pleasures, your pains, your domestic happiness, in short of all that can interest a friend.” As we shall see, however, Sir Hudson Lowe showed, in fact, much more leniency to Napoleon than Count Gneisenau would have approved. Field-Marshal Blücher also wrote to Sir Hudson Lowe, in January 1815, as follows: “The recollection of a man whom, during so very memorable an epoch as the last campaign, we have learnt to esteem and respect, remains dear to us, and will be ever dearly valued through life. On such grounds you may rely with

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confidence on the continuance of my attachment and friendship. I wish you joy from my heart on the important post which the Prince Regent, in his confidence, has bestowed upon you, and I rejoice that the choice has fallen upon a man so perfectly equal to fulfil the duties of it in its whole extent."

Sir Hudson Lowe was still Quartermaster-General in the Netherlands when Napoleon landed from Elba in March 1815, the Prince of Orange being then, as before, Commander-in-Chief. The position of Sir Hudson Lowe was now one of the highest importance, and he soon had an opportunity of rendering a signal service to his country, and indeed to Europe. By the authority of the Prince of Orange, he had despatched a letter to the Prussian headquarters urging that their army should be assembled on the Meuse, in a situation where it would be ready to

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co-operate with the British in the defence of Belgium. Accordingly, in spite of the opposition of General Müffling, chief of the Staff, the Prussian army proceeded to carry out this suggestion. But now, for political reasons, the Prince of Orange and his father the King of Holland drew back, and were desirous of keeping the Prussian army behind the Meuse. "The Prince of Orange directed me," says Sir Hudson Lowe, in a letter written from St. Helena to Lord Bathurst, "to write to General Kleist or General Müffling accordingly. I told the Prince that, having been the means of making these arrangements with the Prussian army, by which it was approaching to act in concert with the British, I did not feel I could with propriety now write to propose a different plan of operation. The Prince, however, insisted upon the necessity of my writing, saying that the instructions he had received from the

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King were positive. I then used every argument in my power to convince the Prince, that, as a *military measure*, it was the only one by which the Low Countries could then be saved, that to propose anything contrary would be entirely against my own opinion as the Quartermaster-General of the Army; and finding he still persevered in desiring me to write, I was compelled at last to say to him that I could not consider the determination which had been taken as founded in any reasons of a *military nature*, and that if they were the result of *political considerations* they were not of my competence to write upon; I therefore begged that he would allow me to decline being the medium of communication." It is perhaps not too much to say that the firmness of Sir Hudson Lowe on this occasion enabled part of the Prussian army to be present at Waterloo. It is pleasing to

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record that subsequently the Prince of Orange admitted the correctness of Sir Hudson Lowe's judgment, and some twenty years later, when King of Holland, greeted him most warmly at a levée of William IV.

In April the Duke of Wellington arrived to take command of the allied army, and in the beginning of May Sir Hudson Lowe was appointed to the command of a body of English troops to act with the British squadron under Lord Exmouth on the south coast of France. Sir Hudson Lowe was succeeded as Quartermaster-General by that gallant soldier Colonel Sir William Howe De Lancey, who was struck by a cannon-ball at Waterloo and died a few days later.\* Sir Hudson Lowe afterwards married Colonel De Lancey's sister, the

\* Of him the Duke of Wellington wrote in a despatch :  
"The death of this officer is a serious loss to myself and to His Majesty's service."

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widow of Lieutenant-Colonel William Johnson. The duties of the British forces in the south of France turned out to be very light. Marseilles was at once occupied without opposition, and Toulon yielded to the Royalists on Sir Hudson's approach. The conduct of Sir Hudson Lowe procured for him the warm esteem of the distinguished Admiral with whom he had co-operated. "You have, my dear Sir Hudson," writes Lord Exmouth under the date of August 27, 1815, from Marseilles, "my entire esteem and regard, and I am sensible, had opportunity been afforded us for more brilliant services, that we should have woven our confidence into the most perfect and lasting friendship." The letter ends with these words: "God bless you, Sir Hudson; may health, success, and happiness attend you! Believe me ever, your sincerely and faithfully attached friend, Exmouth." The Muni-

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cial Council of Marseilles, it may be mentioned, testified their respect for his conduct during the occupation by voting to him, as well as to Lord Exmouth, a handsome piece of silver plate. On August 1, while at Marseilles, Sir Hudson Lowe received a notification that he was appointed Governor of St. Helena, with the local rank of Lieutenant-General, to have the charge of the person of Napoleon, who had about a fortnight previously taken refuge on board the *Bellerophon*.

I have been somewhat minute in tracing the earlier career of Sir Hudson Lowe, because, in view of what followed, it is important to keep in mind the public services he had rendered and the reputation which he bore up to this time. In his *Life of Napoleon*, Lockhart says of Sir Hudson Lowe that the utmost that could be said against him was that his "ante-

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cedents were not splendid." This is not putting the matter fairly. One usually confines the word "splendid" to services which are in themselves exceptionally conspicuous, or which are rendered so by the high rank or position of the person who performs them. In this sense the services of Sir Hudson Lowe were not "splendid," nor could they have been so from the nature of the case; but they may be described as most valuable and distinguished services, and such as had repeatedly earned the commendation of Government. I could have quoted many other letters from officers whose merit is well known, all testifying to the high esteem felt for Sir Hudson Lowe; but those which I have already given are perhaps sufficient.

It is more to the point to observe that, although it has often been said that Sir Hudson Lowe was not an officer of suffi-



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ciently high rank or distinguished career to be entrusted with the custody of Napoleon, this was by no means the opinion of Napoleon himself until he had quarrelled with the Governor. In a well-known letter to Sir Hudson Lowe, dated December 19, 1816, Count Las Cases writes as follows—and on this particular point it suited him at the moment to speak the truth : “ ‘ A man is appointed to take the command here,’ we said (you, sir, were the person alluded to), ‘ who holds a distinguished rank in the army ; he owes his fortune to his personal merit ; his life has been passed in diplomatic missions at the headquarters of the Sovereigns of the Continent, where the name, the rank, the power, the titles of the Emperor Napoleon must have become familiar to him.’ . . . . ‘ This man,’ we said, ‘ in his diplomatic career will have formed just notions both with respect to

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persons and things. His arrival alone is therefore a sufficient pledge of the favourable nature of his instructions with respect to us.' '*Did you not tell me,*' said the Emperor to us one day, '*that he was at Champaubert and at Montmirail? We have then probably exchanged a few cannon-balls together, and that is always, in my eyes, a noble relation to stand in.*' Such was the disposition in which Sir Hudson Lowe was expected." No doubt it is here the object of Las Cases to contrast the expectations they had formed of Sir Hudson Lowe with the reality which (according to their view) they experienced, but these words are conclusive testimony to the *nature* of those expectations. Again, Napoleon said to Colonel Sir George Bingham, who commanded the troops at St. Helena, when he heard of the arrival of Sir Hudson Lowe: "I am glad of it; I am tired of the Admiral (Sir George

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Cockburn),\* and there are many points I should like to talk over with Sir Hudson Lowe. He is a soldier and has served ; he was with Blücher ; besides, he commanded the Corsican regiment and knows many of my friends and acquaintances.”† Let us then hear no more of this ; if Napoleon was satisfied with the antecedents of Sir Hudson Lowe, surely no one else has a right to complain of them.

The character borne by Sir Hudson Lowe up to this date may be fairly summed up in the words of Colonel Basil Jackson, who wrote a short “tribute to his memory” just after his death :

“I was honoured with the friendly notice of Sir Hudson Lowe, and enjoyed much of his

\* Rear-Admiral Sir George Cockburn took Napoleon to St. Helena on the *Northumberland*, and was entrusted with his safe custody until the arrival of Sir Hudson Lowe.

† From a letter of Sir George Bingham to Sir Hudson Lowe.

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confidence during a course of thirty years. I knew him when his military reputation marked him as an officer of the highest promise; I witnessed his able conduct as Governor of St. Helena; I saw him when the malice of his enemies had gained the ascendant, and covered him with unmerited opprobrium; I beheld him on his deathbed: and throughout these various phases of his career I admired and respected his character, while I truly loved the man. I knew him to be a kind, indulgent, affectionate husband and parent, a warm and steady friend, a placable, nay, generous enemy, and an upright public servant." \*

This is a testimonial of which any man might be proud, and if Sir Hudson Lowe had died on the day he was appointed Governor of St. Helena the sentiments here expressed would have been received with universal applause. And yet we are asked to believe, on the authority of Mr. Barry O'Meara and some of Napoleon's fellow-exiles, that the character of Sir

\* *United Service Magazine*, March 1844, p. 417.

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Hudson Lowe was as nearly as possible the reverse of all this ! That he was mean, jealous, suspicious, tyrannical, utterly wanting in kindness and courtesy, fit only to be a jailer or a hangman ! No one, as Juvenal says, ever became base in a moment ; and surely, before a shred of evidence is heard on one side or the other, we have here a psychological puzzle of no ordinary difficulty.

## CHAPTER III

### AT ST. HELENA

A GREAT mass of literature has accumulated round the events of Napoleon's exile at St. Helena, and it would be a hopeless task to attempt to deal with it in detail, or with all the charges that have been brought against Sir Hudson Lowe. I must therefore select a few of the most striking, and point out how easily they can be refuted. What is really difficult is to clear away the dense clouds of prejudice and misrepresentation that still envelop the memory of Sir Hudson Lowe and all that concerns him. However, before dealing with the evidence, such as it is, it is necessary to consider the

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circumstances altogether, and the aims and objects of those on whose testimony Sir Hudson Lowe has been condemned.

To select an officer upon whom should be laid the responsibility for the safe custody of Napoleon was no easy matter for the British Government, and that they appointed Sir Hudson Lowe shows the high opinion they had formed of his vigilance, conscientiousness, and general ability. I am by no means claiming that he was exempt from faults, and these faults I will endeavour to state later ; but, whatever his faults were, they were not those that have been generally attributed to him. It may be said fearlessly that the choice of Government was fully justified by the conduct of Sir Hudson Lowe in his arduous position, and that the unmerited obloquy cast upon him, and still clinging to his memory in the minds of many people, was mainly the result of the efficient manner in which he

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carried out his trust. As he repeatedly said, the office was not one that he had sought ; but when once it was offered to him he had too high a sense of duty to decline it. Sir Hudson Lowe had, as we have seen, high qualifications for the post. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the service he had seen had happened to be such that the new Governor could scarcely be regarded by Napoleon as a *persona grata*, and of this the Emperor was not slow to remind him. For instance, Sir Hudson Lowe had been in command of the Corsican Rangers, a body of men whom Napoleon not unnaturally regarded as brigands and traitors to their country. He had at the close of the war received the submission of Toulon, the place from which at the beginning of the war Napoleon had driven the British, and where he had first made his mark as a military genius. Again, as we have seen, Sir Hudson Lowe



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had brought home the news of Napoleon's abdication, and had been knighted for that very service. All these circumstances were certainly personal arguments against the appointment of Sir Hudson Lowe.

Napoleon always contended that he gave himself up only as the guest of the British nation, and he claimed their hospitality as such. He therefore regarded it as an act of tyranny and injustice that he should be treated as a prisoner of war. But this view cannot bear inspection for a moment. Napoleon in fact had no option but to surrender, if he wished to escape a worse fate. There was no hope for him. If he was still to live he might take one of three courses. He might have put himself at the head of the army at the Loire for a short period (but only to be killed or captured); he might have let himself be made prisoner; or he might have surrendered to one or other of his foes. The

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last course, the one which he actually adopted, was also the best for himself. He afterwards said he regretted he had not surrendered to the Emperor of Russia or the Emperor of Austria. Very probably he did have this regret. We cannot of course say what would have happened in that case, but he would scarcely have surrendered to the King of Prussia, for Blücher had publicly declared that he would have had him shot over the grave of the Duc d'Enghien. It was idle then to pretend that he came as a guest on board the *Bellerophon*. The circumstances were very different from what they were a year before, when Napoleon had been allowed to take the sovereignty of Elba. He had returned to France, and it was now evident that no terms could bind him. Savary and Las Cases did all they could to induce Captain Maitland, of the *Bellerophon*, to receive Napoleon as the guest of the British nation ;

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but that officer declined, as a matter of course, to enter into any engagement for his Government, and simply undertook to convey him safely to England. At a subsequent period Las Cases himself admitted this. At that time Napoleon was not regarded with the sentimental interest which now attaches to his name and fate. There was hardly a household in the United Kingdom that could not point to the loss of some one at least of its members through the long continuance of the Great War. In a celebrated passage Livy describes the dream of Hannibal : “ So he looked and saw behind him a monstrous serpent moving forwards, while trees and houses fell crashing before it ; storm and a peal of thunder followed. Then, as he asked in wonder what the monstrous form portended, he heard a voice say : ‘ Thou seest the desolation of Italy ; go onwards on thy way ; cast no look behind, nor question further,

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nor try to draw the fates from their  
obscurity.' " \* On the track of Napoleon  
followed the desolation of Europe, and  
Shelley's lines, on hearing the news of his  
death, are no exaggeration :

" Ay, alive and still bold," muttered Earth,  
    " Napoleon's fierce spirit rolled  
In terror, and blood, and gold,  
    A torrent of ruin to death from his birth.  
Leave the millions who follow to mould  
    The metal before it be cold,  
And weave into his shame, which like the dead  
Shrouds me, the hopes that from his glory fled."

At the time of Napoleon's surrender, an  
exile to St. Helena or elsewhere was con-  
sidered very lenient treatment, for there  
was then, as Sir Walter Scott reminds us,  
a considerable party in England who were  
in favour of handing him over to the  
Government of Louis XVIII. It is true  
that the Opposition in Parliament professed

\* Livy, xxi. 22.

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a horror at the measure dealt out to Napoleon, but that was merely because they were the Opposition ; and if they had been in power they could hardly have resisted the will of the nation, which demanded some measure of the sort, and readily acquiesced in the banishment to St. Helena. When then Napoleon considered it an outrage that he should be banished to St. Helena at all, the personality of the Governor was a minor matter. As Las Cases wrote in a suppressed passage of his Journal : “The details of St. Helena are unimportant : to be there at all is the great grievance.”\*

The conduct of Napoleon and his suite towards Sir Hudson Lowe was not due merely to caprice or ill-temper, but was the result of a carefully-settled plan by which they hoped to secure their object,

\* “Les détails de Ste. Hélène sont peu de chose ; c'est d'y être qui est la grande affaire.”

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and that object was the Emperor's recall. For a long time they confidently expected this, either through some revolution in France, or even from a mere change of Government in England. Thus, on the fourth interview of Sir Hudson Lowe with Napoleon, the latter said, in reply to some question about a house: "In a couple of years there will be a change in the Ministry in England, or a new Government in France, and I shall no longer be here." Napoleon evidently over-estimated the difference between the Government and the Opposition in the English Parliament. He thought that the speeches of the Opposition, merely made with the view of embarrassing their opponents, really expressed their convictions, and that if Lord Holland and his friends came into power he would speedily be recalled from exile, for almost from the first the treatment of Napoleon,

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like most other things, was made a party question. In accordance with this deliberate plan it was necessary that Napoleon and his grievances should be put before the European, and more especially the British, public, at any cost. "It was his business to have complaints," says Lockhart. The favourite Napoleonic maxim, "Policy justifies everything," was constantly in request at St. Helena, and the disciples did not fall far short of their master in its application.

"In pursuance of this system," says a writer in the *Hereford Journal*, in 1853, probably Colonel Jackson, "all communications from Sir Hudson, written or otherwise, were to be misunderstood; points which it was well known to be out of the power of Sir Hudson to concede were to be perpetually insisted on; all acts of courtesy were to be construed into insults, every proposed amelioration of their

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condition was to be received as an aggravation of their misery, while lying to any extent was to be unscrupulously resorted to whenever it could forward the great end they had in view." Generals Bertrand, Montholon, and Gourgaud, and Count Las Cases were all honourable men—"at least according to the *Code Napoléon*," as Colonel Jackson caustically observes—and we need not bestow too much severity of censure on any of their acts in the service of a master whose will to them was law. Count Las Cases was a worshipper by nature: he said the Emperor was his god, and an eloquent French writer has said of him, "He had the servility of a domestic and the blindness of a devotee." Bertrand was, according to Mr. Henry,\* who knew him well at St. Helena, the most honest and honourable man of the Longwood estab-

\* *Events of a Military Life*, vol. ii. p. 92.



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lishment, and, he adds, "*on all other subjects than those immediately relating to the Emperor's interests*, of unimpeachable veracity." This, however, is rather a large deduction, considering that Bertrand said or did little at St. Helena that had not reference to the Emperor. Even among this party Count Montholon was distinguished for his disregard of truth, and Napoleon himself cautioned him against this habit. An amusing instance of this is found in the statement in his *Récits*\* of his regret at General Gourgaud's departure, when only a month before Gourgaud had challenged Montholon to a duel, which the latter declined only on the ground of his attendance on the Emperor! Of General Gourgaud I

\* Vol. iii. p. 3 (English edition). See also Forsyth, ii. 248 and iii. 390. The date of the challenge was Feb. 4, 1818, and General Gourgaud embarked for England on March 14. As a favour he was allowed to sail for Europe direct instead of going first to the Cape.

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shall have more to say later. While at St. Helena he conducted himself with perfect propriety, which was probably one reason why he fell into the Emperor's bad graces. The evidence of the French, then, is of little account as against Sir Hudson Lowe; but their admissions are valuable as evidence in his favour. Now it happens that we have these admissions in abundance. When Las Cases was sent away from St. Helena for misconduct, at the end of 1816, the MS. of his journal came into the hands of the Governor, who, before returning it, very properly had it copied as a matter of public interest. This journal contains many passages that are suppressed in the journal as published. One of the suppressed passages is as follows :

“We are possessed of moral arms only; and in order to make the most advantageous use of these it was necessary to reduce into *a system*

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our demeanour, our words, our sentiments, *even our privations*, in order that we might thereby excite a lively interest in a large portion of the population of Europe, and that the Opposition in England might not fail to attack the Ministry on the violence of their conduct towards us.” \*

Colonel Basil Jackson informs us that† while visiting Paris in 1828 he accidentally met Count Montholon, who invited his wife and himself to pass a few days at his country seat. Colonel Jackson thus continues :

“He (Count Montholon) enlarged upon what he termed *la politique de Longwood*, spoke not unkindly of Sir Hudson Lowe, allowing he had a difficult task to execute, *since an angel from heaven as Governor could not have pleased them*. When I more than hinted that nothing could justify detraction and departure from truth in carrying out a policy, he merely shrugged his shoulders and reiterated, ‘C’était notre politique,

\* Under the date of November 30, 1815. This passage is given by Forsyth, vol. i. p. 5.

† *Waterloo and St. Helena*, pp. 103, foll.

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et que voulez-vous?’ That he and the others respected Sir Hudson Lowe I had not the shadow of a doubt; nay, in a conversation with Montholon at St. Helena, when speaking of the Governor, he observed that Sir Hudson was an officer who would always have distinguished employment, as all governments were glad of the services of a man of his calibre. Happening to mention that, owing to his inability to find an officer who could understand and speak French, the Governor was disposed to employ me as orderly officer at Longwood, Montholon said it was well for me that I was not appointed to the post, as they did not want a person in that capacity who could understand them; in fact, he said, ‘We should have found means to get rid of you, and perhaps ruined you.’ Now, it was simply because an officer of the rank of captain had always acted at Longwood, and the Governor knew that to have sent them an officer who was only a lieutenant would have been deemed a kind of insult by Napoleon, and as such resented. I was subsequently glad the project failed.”

These admissions require no comment. Moreover, we have the evidence of

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O'Meara, who, writing to Sir Thomas Reade\* on July 10, 1816, while he was still on good terms with Sir Hudson Lowe, thus expresses himself: "They [the French] are sufficiently malignant to impute all these things [want of proper provisions] to the Governor, instead of setting them down as being owing to the neglect or carelessness of some of Balcombe's [the purveyor] people. Every little circumstance is carried directly to Bonaparte, with every aggravation that malignity and falsehood can suggest to evil-disposed and cankered minds."† It is needless to add that this passage does not occur in his published book.

We thus have a clue to guide us through all the plausible statements made by writers on behalf of Napoleon. There

\* The Deputy Adjutant-General. A French publication called him *Le Castlereagh de Ste. Hélène*.

† Forsyth, i. 237.

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was a regular series of them. First, the publication of Warden, the surgeon of the *Northumberland*, then that of Santini, one of Napoleon's servants. Both these appeared in the Emperor's lifetime, and we have the advantage of his own comments on them. Of Warden's book he said: "The foundation of it is true; but in it there are *cento coglioniere e cento bugie* (a hundred absurdities and a hundred lies)." But this is speaking too gently. General Gourgaud wrote of it as a "mere tissue of falsehoods." Of Santini's book (which, as it turned out, was not by Santini at all) Napoleon said that it was "a foolish production, exaggerated, full of *coglioniere* and some lies." However, these *brochures* served their purpose, which was to gull the British public. Las Cases' journal is of course a more serious publication; but the published journal, as above remarked, is

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very different from the MS. journal that came into the hands of Sir Hudson Lowe. Other publications were the *Récits* of Montholon, and especially *A Voice from St. Helena* of O'Meara, of which I must speak more particularly. There seems to have been no personal animosity on the part of the French towards Sir Hudson Lowe. Like Lady Teazle, they took away his character with the utmost good-nature. This is shown, not only by their own admissions afterwards, but also by their conduct immediately after the death of Napoleon. "The hatchet was buried," and Counts Bertrand and Montholon (Las Cases and Gourgaud having left St. Helena long before) made their peace with Sir Hudson Lowe, who, with his accustomed generosity, was quite willing to meet them. They all called at the Governor's house, stayed to lunch, and all dined there on the following day.

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There was no reason for keeping up appearances any longer. We have similar testimony from Colonel Jackson, who wrote thus to Mr. Forsyth: "I never heard any of the French say a word against Sir Hudson Lowe's bearing towards them. His orders to his officers were to do all that courtesy and kindness could dictate to render the situation of the French persons as little unpleasant as possible, and, so far as I saw, every desire on their part was promptly attended to. He was himself a man possessing little of what is called *manner*—no man had less of that—but he was full of kindness, liberality and consideration for the feelings of others." Thus we find Madame Bertrand returning thanks for a donkey which the Governor sent for her little boy, and for a picture in tapestry which had been detained from her by a person in the island, and which the Governor in-



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stantly procured for her. "These are trifles in themselves," says Mr. Forsyth, "but they are trifles which indicate kindness; and a man's disposition and character are often more clearly shown in little things than in matters of more serious import." From this absence of personal feeling I am afraid I must except Count Las Cases, who certainly seems to have cherished some spite against Sir Hudson Lowe. At any rate, his son did, as we shall see later. For some time before his death Napoleon himself, perceiving that his hopes of recall were entirely baseless, seems to have become more reconciled to his lot, and really to have shown some gratitude for the constant attentions shown him by Sir Hudson Lowe. On his deathbed he charged Bertrand and Montholon to seek a reconciliation with the Governor, which was done with the result above men-

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tioned. The tragi-comedy of five years  
was played out.

It must be allowed that Napoleon was  
less difficult to deal with than his attendants.  
Affairs might have been more readily  
adjusted if more personal intercourse be-  
tween the Governor and his illustrious  
captive had taken place. But they only  
had five interviews in all,\* and the last of  
them was only four months after Sir  
Hudson Lowe's arrival. It was, as we  
have seen, Bertrand, Montholon, and  
others who persistently and purposely  
exaggerated and misrepresented every-  
thing, in order to make occasions of  
quarrel. This was, in short, *la politique*  
*de Longwood*.

The complaints of the French writers  
are such as might be expected from the

\* I do not here include the short interview of June 20,  
1816, which was merely for the purpose of introducing  
to Napoleon the new admiral, Sir Pulteney Malcolm.

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circumstances in which they were placed, and naturally, owing to those circumstances, would not make much impression on an impartial reader. Moreover, their own admissions have sufficiently discounted the value of their evidence. There is another person whose statements and insinuations have been the chief cause in England of the odium cast upon Sir Hudson Lowe. I refer to Napoleon's surgeon, Mr. Barry O'Meara. We have seen what manner of man Sir Hudson Lowe was. Let us also examine the character of Mr. Barry O'Meara, and when that is fully appreciated the most difficult part of my task will be accomplished. One cannot be surprised at the amount of prejudice raised against Sir Hudson Lowe by *A Voice from St. Helena*. It is written with an engaging air of frankness—"an affected candour," says Colonel Jackson—and considerable literary skill, and would naturally

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lead the reader into the belief of the account given therein. Besides this it seemed unlikely, to say the least, that a British officer would so far forget his position and his duty as to enlist himself secretly in Napoleon's service, to become *l'homme de l'Empereur*, as the phrase was, and therefore to misstate facts deliberately for the purpose of producing sympathy for Napoleon. And again, if a British officer were willing to be guilty of such treachery, there did not seem to be sufficient inducement for it. But these two unlikely things turned out to be strictly true. O'Meara was guilty of this baseness, he had sufficient inducement, and he received the reward which he had certainly earned. Barry O'Meara was surgeon on board the *Bellerophon* when Napoleon surrendered to Captain Maitland. He recommended himself to the Emperor's notice, and was subsequently asked to become his surgeon.

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It is not necessary to suppose, in the first instance, anything further than that O'Meara succumbed to the fascination of the Emperor. There is abundant testimony to the great personal attraction which Napoleon exercised over those with whom he came into contact. How great this attraction was may be inferred from a remark of Admiral Lord Keith, who in reply to repeated applications on behalf of Napoleon for a personal interview with the Prince Regent exclaimed : " That would never do ! In half an hour they would be excellent friends ! "

As the Emperor's surgeon, O'Meara sailed to St. Helena on board the *Northumberland*, and was in personal attendance upon Napoleon afterwards until his summary removal by the order of the Government in the summer of 1818. Being a man of plausibility and considerable social gifts, he managed for some time to keep

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on good terms both with Napoleon and with Sir Hudson Lowe, and *spontaneously* gave to the latter a good deal of information of how matters were going at Longwood. The Governor, in fact, got his salary raised from £365 to £520. Sir Hudson Lowe, however, was naturally unwilling to question O'Meara on this delicate subject, as it might be thought he wished the surgeon to act as a spy—until he ascertained that O'Meara was in the habit of carrying on a detailed correspondence with a friend at the Admiralty, and then he considered that what was of sufficient importance to be conveyed direct to England for the benefit of the Cabinet—for this correspondence was shown to them—certainly ought to be communicated to himself. Even then the Governor left it to O'Meara to say what he chose, and to select what was proper to be thus communicated. And yet O'Meara had the

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astounding impudence to charge the Governor with wishing to employ him as a spy ! This charge against Sir Hudson Lowe has unfortunately met with much belief. For instance, the writer of the notice of O'Meara in the *Dictionary of National Biography* says : " Lowe wished him to act to some extent as a spy upon his prisoner and to repeat to him the private conversation of the Emperor." We have only O'Meara's bare word for this, as against documentary evidence with which it is inconsistent. Let us hear also Sir Hudson himself. In a private letter to Lord Bathurst soon after O'Meara's enforced departure, the Governor entered into the question of his conduct towards that person. He said : " There are three points upon which I have conceived Mr. O'Meara may endeavour to raise a voice in his favour.

" *First*, he may say I wanted to employ

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him as a spy. *Answer:* I never asked him to give me any other information than what he had been in the habit of carrying to Sir George Cockburn, and this I asked him even in Sir George's presence ; since when even Count Montholon has acknowledged I had a right to expect being informed of any discussions into which he might enter with General Bonaparte respecting my duties or his own, or of any improper communications going on.

“ *Secondly*, he may ask why, if I had complaints against him, I did not bring them to a hearing. *Answer:* The complaints against him were of such a nature as that, if proved, I could not have suffered him to remain on the island without the worst effect of example, from a supposed impunity, upon the officers and inhabitants in general ; and having received his resignation, reporting to Government General



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Bonaparte's application for a French or Italian physician to succeed him, I considered it best, unless he should himself apply to the Admiral, to let matters rest until the answer of Government should be received. [That is, an answer to a representation made by Sir Hudson Lowe about Mr. O'Meara's conduct.]

“*Thirdly*, he may complain of my general mode of treatment towards him.

*Answer:* If, through consideration to the very particular circumstances of General Bonaparte's situation, I was induced to act with a moderation and apparent lenity towards Mr. O'Meara which I could not have done towards any other individual, this was no reason I should at the same time continue to him those personal regards as an officer and a gentleman which his conduct and proceedings had appeared to me to destroy all claim to. I never, therefore, suffered him to enter my house, ex-

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cept by the outer door of it, which leads to the Secretary's office ; and whenever he attempted to manifest any impertinence in his replies to my interrogatories, dismissed him immediately from my presence." It is not pleasant to be told to leave the room, and after reading "thirdly" we can hardly be surprised that O'Meara cherished some animosity towards Sir Hudson Lowe.

But O'Meara was not only untrue to his salt, he was guilty of a double treachery, for at the very time when he was giving some information to Sir Hudson Lowe and much more to his friend at the Admiralty (Mr. Finlaison) he had actually long been under a pledge to Napoleon himself "not to reveal the conversations that passed between them, unless they related to his escape." Mr. O'Meara, having already made shipwreck of his own honour, tried to induce others to follow his example. I have already had

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occasion to refer to Mr. Walter Henry, who was at this time at St. Helena as assistant-surgeon, and soon as acting surgeon, of the 66th Regiment. In his very interesting work, *Events of a Military Life*, he devotes about one hundred pages to his experiences on the island. Not a word has ever been uttered against his character or impartiality, and his narrative is amply confirmed in its details by the letters and official documents which Mr. Forsyth has published. Mr. Henry gives an account of how an attempt was made to bribe him to become *l'homme de l'Empereur* through the agency of O'Meara. He had attended Cipriani, the *maître d'hôtel* of Napoleon, during an illness which proved fatal, and he was asked through O'Meara to accept a breakfast service of plate. He describes in an amusing way the visions he had of this present, but the British Parliament had lately made the acceptance

Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon of any gift from Napoleon a criminal act, and his duty was clear. "The matter," he says, "was plain enough—a palpable attempt at a bribe, to enlist even so humble a person as myself into Napoleon's service, and to bind him down to implicit obedience, by first making him commit himself in a wrong action." It was a case of this sort, another attempt to bribe in which O'Meara acted the part of an intermediary, that led to restrictions being laid on him by the Governor in April 1818. However, the account of Mr. Forsyth is much too lengthy and minute, so I will quote the narrative of Mr. Henry, every word of which is amply confirmed by documentary evidence.

"Mr. O'Meara, on finding his intrigues with the persons he had tried to bribe discovered, sent in his resignation; whilst at the same time Napoleon applied for a foreign medical attendant. Sir Hudson Lowe sent home their

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applications, confining Mr. O'Meara to the bounds of Longwood, and placing him under the same restrictions as the other persons of Napoleon's household. A few weeks after this an order arrived from England to send home Mr. O'Meara ; not from any representations from Sir Hudson Lowe, for there was not time for the recent offence of this gentleman to be communicated, but in consequence of information received by the Government at home inculcating him as the tool of the fallen Emperor." \*

This information related to clandestine correspondence, and had been given by General Gourgaud, who had recently returned from St. Helena. It is important to observe that it was the Government and not Sir Hudson Lowe who removed Mr. O'Meara. Sir Hudson Lowe had not had up to this time proof of O'Meara's complicity, and the way in which the latter was backed up by influential members of the Government had prevented the Governor from taking all the steps he might other-

\* Henry, ii. pp. 40, 41.

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wise have taken. However, very soon after O'Meara's departure there arrived at St. Helena such convincing proof of his being a tool of the Emperor as amply justified the Government in their action. After April 1818, but before the summary order for O'Meara's dismissal had been received, O'Meara was excluded from the mess of the 66th Regiment, of which he had been an honorary member. Of course he has set this down entirely to the machinations of the wicked Governor. In his book he attributes it to Sir Hudson Lowe having employed Sir Thomas Reade to fill the mind of Colonel Lascelles with the most insidious calumnies against him, and to insinuate that his expulsion would be very agreeable to the Governor. As this is a good example of O'Meara's misrepresentations, I will give the particulars of it from the narrative of Mr. Henry, who was in a position to know accurately

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what happened. It is true that O'Meara was excluded from the mess, that it was due to the intervention of Sir Hudson Lowe, and that some of the officers of the mess did express their regret at his departure. However, let us hear Mr. Henry, and we can then judge whether Mr. O'Meara had much ground for complaint. He writes as follows :

“About this time Mr. O'Meara, having been discovered tampering with two or three individuals on the island, with the object of prevailing on them to accept presents clandestinely from Napoleon, in violation of the regulations in force; and being also accused of repeating the confidential conversation of our mess, of which he was an honorary member, at Longwood, the Governor stated the facts of the case to Sir George Bingham and the Commanding Officer of the 66th, intimating to the latter his opinion that Mr. O'Meara should not be permitted to continue a member of the mess, he having abused the privileges his position gave him. . . . Without consulting the officers of the mess, or submitting for their consideration the facts com-

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municated to him by the Governor, the Commanding Officer sent a written intimation to Mr. O'Meara that his society was no longer desired by the regiment, which pretty strong hint the doctor disregarded, came to dinner the same day, and afterwards appealed to the officers of the mess as to the propriety of his conduct whilst mixing with them. Having been kept in the dark as to the real culpability of Mr. O'Meara, and being, perhaps, a little piqued at the proceedings of their Commanding Officer, they readily certified to the gentlemanly deportment of Mr. O'Meara whilst he was a member of the mess. . . . It is, I think, much to be regretted that the officers of the 66th should have given Mr. O'Meara any written certificate of good conduct whilst a member of their mess. However correct his behaviour might have been before, the gross insult to our Commanding Officer, and indirectly to ourselves, of sitting down to dinner after the prohibitory note he had received ought to have prevented any verbal or written testimony being given to a man who could act with such effrontery. As it turned out, our certificate eventually became one chief prop to the credibility of O'Meara's *Voice from St. Helena*—a specious but sophistical book, full of misrepresentations, yet more remarkable for



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the *suppressio veri* than the *assertio falsi*. .

With reference to the breach of social confidence in reporting our mess conversation to Bonaparte, I have no doubt whatever of the fact. In the unreserve of conversation with Madame Bertrand on the voyage to England, after the death of Napoleon, she acknowledged to me that this charge was true." \*

Immediately after his arrival in England O'Meara addressed a long letter to the Admiralty in self-justification, full of complaints against Sir Hudson Lowe. However, he overreached himself, and, intending murder, committed suicide, for he introduced into it the monstrous insinuation that the Governor had sounded him as to his willingness to hasten the death of the Emperor by artificial means.† The

\* Henry, ii. pp. 40, 41.

† On this alleged design to poison Napoleon, Count Montholon made a characteristic remark: "We don't believe it ourselves, *but it is always well to say so.*" (Nous ne le croyons pas nous-mêmes, *mais c'est toujours bon à dire*). The malignity of the charge is hardly greater than its absurdity.—Forsyth, iii. 187, note.

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reply from the Secretary to the Admiralty was short and obvious. It contained these words :

“There is one passage in your said letter of such a nature as to supersede the necessity of animadverting upon any other parts of it. This passage is as follows [the passage containing the above insinuation is then set out]. It is impossible to doubt the meaning which this passage was intended to convey, and my Lords can as little doubt that the insinuation is a calumnious falsehood ; but if it were true, and if so horrible a suggestion were made to you directly or indirectly, it was your bounden duty not to have lost a moment in communicating it to the Admiral on the spot, or to the Secretary of State, or to their Lordships.

“An overture so monstrous in itself, and so deeply involving not merely the personal character of the Governor, but the honour of the nation and the important interests committed to his charge, should not have been reserved in your own breast for two years, to be produced at last, not (as it would appear) from a sense of public duty, but in futherance of your personal hostility against the Governor.

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“ Either the charge is in the last degree false and calumnious, or you can have no possible excuse for having hitherto suppressed it. In either case, and without adverting to the general tenor of your conduct as stated in your letter, my Lords consider you to be an improper person to continue in His Majesty’s service, and they have directed your name to be erased from the list of Naval Surgeons accordingly.—I have, &c. (Signed) “J. W. CROKER.”

This then is the man whose *A Voice from St. Helena* has recently been republished! This is the man who has been immortalised by Byron in the well-known couplet—

“ And the stiff surgeon who maintained his cause  
Hath lost his place and gained the world’s applause.”

Of which two lines it is sufficient to say that they contain about as much truth as O’Meara’s own statements. The dismissal of course put an end to O’Meara’s public career; but if his activity was limited in one direction, there were other fields open.

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He could still calumniate, and his efforts in this direction, we must admit, were crowned with well-deserved success. In 1822 he brought out in two volumes, *A Voice from St. Helena*—a book with an attractive title, an agreeable style, and the other characteristics I have before mentioned. It had an immense literary success, five editions being run through in a few months. What caused its popularity was not the report of Napoleon's conversations but the unscrupulous attack upon Sir Hudson Lowe, for the literature of detraction has ever proved the most interesting. Tacitus tells us that he deliberately began his *Annals* with the principate of Tiberius, in order to depict the Roman Empire in the blackest colours. If I may compare small things with great, O'Meara dipped his pen in gall to show to us Sir Hudson Lowe—the Tiberius of St. Helena—and he has had his reward. Has he not been

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embalmed in a couplet? Was he not pensioned by the Bonaparte family, admitted to the affections of a rich old lady as a third husband (her first marriage was nine years before the birth of O'Meara), and again pensioned by her, besides being, as Mr. Henry says, "admired, quoted, and panegyrised by all the Bonapartists yet extant"? Is not this enough to atone for the brutality of a dozen Sir Hudson Lowes? And yet the writer of the memoir of O'Meara—prefixed to the recent edition of his book—speaks of his "disappointed hopes"! Really, he must have been hard to please. One result of O'Meara's popularity among the Bonapartists, however, must not be omitted. It is a remarkable example of the irony of human life.

After the establishment of the Second Empire, the mother of that excellent and pious lady, the late Miss Kathleen O'Meara,

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the authoress of the *Life of Ozanam*, and many charming works of fiction, was, it seems, awarded a handsome pension on the ground of being the daughter-in-law of that self-convicted calumniator, Mr. Barry O'Meara! I say "self-convicted," for it is a singular fact in connection with the exile of Napoleon at St. Helena that most of the charges made against Sir Hudson Lowe can be disproved by the evidence of the very people who made them. What supplies the poison also supplies the antidote. We have seen how Napoleon's suite admitted that the whole of their conduct was based on a system, and when that system necessarily came to an end on the death of Napoleon they acknowledged they had nothing to say against the Governor. So in the case of O'Meara. He was carrying on a correspondence with his friend Mr. Finlaison at the Admiralty, and the garbled

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accounts after wards concocted for *A Voice from St. Helena* are often in point blank contradiction to the accounts written at the time when the events narrated took place! It has been the business of Mr. Forsyth in his work to go minutely into this, and to confront O'Meara in page after page of his book with his own statements made in letters at the time. If ever any one spoke with a "double voice" it was O'Meara, but there has never been the slightest difficulty in deciding to which of the two we should give credit. O'Meara's character was thoroughly exposed in the *Quarterly Review* for October 1822, and to this O'Meara had the prudence not to make any reply. A few years after the death of Sir Hudson Lowe, Mr. Murray commissioned Sir Harris Nicolas, the well-known antiquary to prepare for publication the papers of the late Governor of St. Helena. Unfortunately, Sir Harris

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Nicolas died before completing his task, but the opinion he had formed of some of the persons involved is expressed in two letters to Colonel Jackson, who had furnished him with some information. He thus writes from Boulogne, March 1, 1848, of Sir Hudson Lowe: "Not a spot will, I hope and believe, rest upon his memory. Such an exposure of lying malignity and scoundrelism on the part of O'Meara, Montholon, Las Cases, Antommarchi [the Italian surgeon], &c., as the work will exhibit, will be almost unprecedented." And again, on March 30, 1848: "By the time I have finished I think I shall have been in company with *more liars* than any living author. If people meet in the next world with a knowledge of each other, and with an exposure of their several falsehoods and villany, what must have been the scenes between Sir Hudson Lowe, Las Cases, and



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O'Meara!"\* The papers of Sir Hudson Lowe were subsequently put into the hands of Mr. Forsyth, who thus, in his preface, comments with just severity upon O'Meara :

"I am not one of those who think that conduct such as he has been guilty of in slandering others may be sufficiently censured in the dulcet tones of gentle animadversion. He merits a sterner and more fearless judgment. Such writers are the pest of literature. They corrupt the stream of history by poisoning its fountains, and the effect of his work has been to mislead all succeeding authors and perpetuate a tale of falsehood."

He says further on, of O'Meara's book :  
"The object of the *Voice* was to avenge himself upon Sir Hudson Lowe, as the supposed author of his disgrace. And the means of accomplishing this was not difficult to a man who was content to sacrifice

\* These letters are printed by Col. Basil Jackson in *Waterloo and St. Helena*, pp. 116, 117.

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truth, honour, and honesty in the attempt. He had been in constant intercourse with Napoleon, and had had many confidential interviews with Sir Hudson Lowe. He knew perfectly well the real character of every alleged grievance and complaint, and he had taken copious notes of transactions and conversations as they occurred. What then was more easy than to recast these memoranda and garble them to suit the object he had in view—to suppress some passages and add others, so as to alter the tone and complexion of the original, and yet preserve throughout a substratum of fact? And this is what O'Meara has done. It is a serious charge to bring against a writer, and one which ought not to be lightly made nor readily believed. But, happily for the cause of truth, in this case, proofs, amounting to demonstration, of what is here asserted can be supplied."

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Mr. Forsyth then refers to the series of confidential letters of O'Meara to Mr. Finlaison and to the notes of conversations made at the time by Major Gorrequer, the Governor's Military Secretary. Of Napoleon, Mr. Forsyth says in his preface: "If I know anything of myself, my sympathies were in his favour. I cannot now sufficiently express my admiration of his genius; but neither can I blind myself to the fact that he did not exhibit in misfortune that magnanimity without which there is no real greatness, and that he concentrated the energies of his mighty intellect on the ignoble task of insulting the Governor of St. Helena and manufacturing a case of hardship and oppression for himself. I have endeavoured to hold the balance even, and it is not the weight of prejudice, but of facts, which has made one of the scales preponderate." Of Sir Hudson Lowe he writes: "I was not

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asked to make out a case for Sir Hudson Lowe, nor, had I been asked to do so, would I have consented. I regarded the duty of examining the papers left by him as a solemn trust, for the due and truthful discharge of which I was responsible to the public, and a still more searching tribunal, my own conscience."

I have already described the nature of *A Voice from St. Helena*. I would gladly omit all mention of the republication in 1888, but as that book would now be given to any one inquiring for O'Meara's narrative, it is necessary to say a few words about it. It is handsomely got up, with excellent paper and print and some interesting illustrations, and has been rechristened *Napoleon at St. Helena*. There are some additions and some omissions. The additional matter shows all the good intention of O'Meara without his literary ability. The book is introduced

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with a quotation (given twice over) from Carlyle, who says: "O'Meara's work has increased my respect for Napoleon," and then goes on to compare Napoleon to Prometheus Vincit, "arising above it all by the stern force of his own unconquerable spirit." Unconscious satire could hardly go further. Carlyle, after all, merely says (but expresses better) what any man who had read O'Meara's book *only* might say. It is obvious that he knew nothing of the other side, and in any case this *obiter dictum* cannot increase one's respect for the "Sage of Chelsea." Next come two short memoirs of Sir Hudson Lowe and Mr. O'Meara respectively, then a lengthy introduction. The writer on Sir Hudson Lowe, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, to whom reference has already been made, shortly says of the "Lives" in this book that they are "worthless," an epithet which

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an examination amply confirms. Taking them with the introduction, it is not unjust to say that many of the "facts" are fiction, while the method of argument shows an ineptitude of which O'Meara (to do him justice) would have been ashamed. One or two specimens will suffice. We read, in allusion to Sir Hudson Lowe's delay in prosecuting O'Meara for libel, "The only reason given by Lowe for his delay was the time required for meeting charges in which truth was so artfully blended with falsehood—an admission that we have a good deal of truth in the journal." Precisely: it is the truth mingled with the falsehood that makes it so dangerous. Exaggeration and misrepresentation of facts are always more difficult to expose than pure fiction, and a book that spreads these broadcast is proportionately more venomous and deadly, for

"The lie that is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies."

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Again, there is quoted, as a testimonial to O'Meara, an extract from a letter of Lord Dudley (in the Dudley Letters) to which he is certainly welcome. Having met the author of the *Voice from St. Helena* at dinner, Lord Dudley writes as follows: "He is cheerful, good-humoured and communicative, and, in spite of an air of confident vulgarity which is diffused over all his behaviour, the impression he made on me was rather favourable. At least my belief in what he has told was strengthened by having seen him, and still more so by some conversation which I happened to have the very next day with Sir G——C——, whom I met at Gloucester Lodge. He defends Sir Hudson Lowe only just as far as prudence and decorum oblige an official man to do so. Indeed, he acknowledged that, with respect to what passed in St. Helena, he was disposed to take O'Meara's part. He mentioned a

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circumstance, however, since O'Meara's return to England, which he thought disreputable—a letter addressed by him to the Admiralty, containing a charge against Sir Hudson Lowe which, if made at all, ought to have been made openly and substantiated by proof. This, therefore, must be set off against that appearance of credibility which is, as I think, distinguishable in O'Meara's book and in his conversation."

Lord Dudley's "impression" naturally counts for very little, but with regard to Sir George Cockburn two remarks may be made. First, Sir George Cockburn left St. Helena in June 1816, which was considerably more than a year before the Governor had a breach with O'Meara, so he could know nothing personally of the merits of the case; and, secondly, Lord Bathurst wrote to Sir Hudson Lowe in November 1818 that Sir G. Cockburn



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was the first person who, on reading the charges, declared that O'Meara ought to be instantly dismissed the service. Another statement (in the memoir of O'Meara) is : "On his [O'Meara's] return to England he was well received by the Lords of the Admiralty, and is said to have had the valuable post of surgeon to Greenwich Hospital offered to him." Yes, his "reception" consisted in his summary dismissal from His Majesty's service—if that is being "well received"—and the insinuation about Greenwich Hospital is simply untrue. More than seventy years ago Mr. Finlaison—O'Meara's old correspondent—wrote in a letter to the *Morning Chronicle* :\* "Mr. O'Meara having stated in the latter part of his letter that I offered him the lucrative situation of surgeon to Greenwich Hospital, I beg leave to state, in the most distinct manner, that I never

\* Of March 3, 1823.

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was authorised to make any such proposition, and that, therefore, it is but fair to presume that I never could have done so."

With regard to O'Meara's dismissal, the defence is made that he could not have brought the charge at the time, because Sir Hudson Lowe would have seen it. But surely he could have written it direct to the Ministry, just as he wrote to Mr. Finlaison without the knowledge of the Governor, or again, as the Secretary to the Admiralty reminded him, he could have made the charge before the Admiral on the station at St. Helena, who was independent of the Governor. The defence made is simply childish. We read again, "The accuracy of O'Meara's narrative is emphatically endorsed by Count Las Cases." Very probably it is. Las Cases, however, has quite enough to do to look after his own character for "accuracy";

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certainly he has not enough character for two. This remark again is childish. In a "note" the publishers state that advantage has been taken of the narrative of Baron Stürmer, and the *Life of Governor Lowe* by Forsyth, to supplement "any important passages or events by the impressions of other observers at the moment—since made accessible." Baron Stürmer was the Austrian Commissioner resident at St. Helena. He was, at the suggestion of the British Government, removed from St. Helena at the end of June 1818, in consequence of his persisting in unauthorised communications with the French at Longwood; "but," adds Mr. Forsyth, "the unpleasantness of dismissal was veiled under the guise of an appointment as Consul-General for Austria to the United States of America." He was hardly likely, therefore, to say much in favour of Sir Hudson Lowe, though he was a frequent guest at

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his table. It is true the new and anonymous editor does sometimes refer in a footnote in small print to Mr. Forsyth's book, but in such a way as to leave the impression that O'Meara and Forsyth agree in substance but differ in some details. Forsyth, as I need hardly remind the reader, is flatly contradicting O'Meara nearly all the time. Some of the most flagrant and obvious misstatements of fact on the part of O'Meara are omitted; for instance, those contained in the entries of July 6, 1816, and December 18, 1817. The former entry is thoroughly exposed in the *Quarterly Review* article of October 1822, the latter by Forsyth. Some of the language previously attributed to Lord Amherst, who called in at St. Helena on his return from China, is omitted, Lord Amherst having taken the trouble to disavow it expressly. With regard to omissions, the publishers state that some "purely repetitory passages

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have been omitted, also the story of the early days of Napoleon's butler, Cipriani." Under which heading do they class the omissions above specified? There is also an additional chapter professing to continue the narrative to the death of Napoleon. The writer faithfully imitates O'Meara in his regard for accuracy. For instance, he says that, in January 1820, Napoleon "on several occasions breakfasted at the house of Sir Wm. Doveton on the other side of the island." Napoleon *once* only did so, and this was on October 4, 1820.\* Forsyth gives a minute description of it, as being a thing that only occurred *once*. Again, a description is given of a visit of Miss Susanna Johnson, "the young and pretty daughter of Lady Lowe," who "ventured to come alone to Longwood," and

\* On this occasion the worthy knight described Napoleon's appearance in a phrase more expressive than elegant: "He looked," he said, "as fat and as round as a China pig."

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of her accidentally meeting the Emperor, who gave her a rose. For this Montholon is quoted as authority ; but the writer should have seen the absurdity of it, and Miss Lowe, the half-sister of Miss Johnson, writes : “ A pure invention ; such a thing was impossible.”

Such then is the value of the evidence of the French and of O'Meara. They spoke of each other, it is true, in terms the reverse of flattering, but their object was the same—to further the political plans of Napoleon. The French attacked Sir Hudson Lowe on political grounds, O'Meara attacked him mainly for personal reasons. What evidence is there on the other side? To begin with, the charges are obviously over-stated. If true, they prove too much. If true, it is hardly conceivable that the admirals on the station in succession—viz., Sir Pulteney Malcolm, Admiral Plampin, and Admiral Lambert,

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would not have interfered. They, at any rate, cannot have been terrorised by Sir Hudson Lowe. We find, however, that Sir Pulteney Malcolm, who was present at the last and stormiest interview between the Governor and Napoleon, gives the strongest testimony to the self-control of Sir Hudson Lowe, and this has the more weight in that the Governor and the Admiral were not on the most cordial terms. Moreover, the character of a man is judged most correctly by those among whom he spends his life, for no man can be always acting. It is not denied that Sir Hudson Lowe was personally popular with the inhabitants of St. Helena. They voted him an address when leaving, which contained much more than conventional expressions of regret at his departure, and some years later (in 1828) when, returning from Ceylon, he called in at St. Helena, he was fêted enthusiastically by the people,

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who gratefully remembered the justice and kindness of his rule.

I will now take the direct evidence in favour of Sir Hudson Lowe. First is that of Lieutenant-Colonel Basil Jackson, whom I have already had occasion to quote. He was a gentleman universally respected, and died only a few years ago at the patriarchal age of ninety-four. He first became known to Sir Hudson Lowe as serving on the Staff in the Netherlands in 1814 and 1815, and the impression which Sir Hudson Lowe made upon him on first acquaintance has already been given. The impression was mutually favourable, for, on being nominated Governor of St. Helena, Sir H. Lowe invited Lieutenant Jackson to accompany him. His duty was to keep Longwood House and its appurtenances in a habitable state, with strict orders to neglect nothing that could tend to promote the comfort of Napoleon and the persons of his suite.



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Probably Lieutenant Jackson was on more friendly terms with the French than any other Englishman, and so had exceptional opportunities of knowing their real sentiments. At a later period he was Lieutenant-Colonel of the Royal Staff Corps and Professor of Military Surveying at the East India College at Addiscombe. As Colonel Jackson uniformly speaks in favour of Sir Hudson Lowe, and as nothing whatever can be alleged against his character, an attempt has been made to detract from the weight of his testimony by the assertion that he was from early youth a *protégé* of Sir Hudson Lowe—an assertion which is perfectly untrue; and further, it has somehow got abroad that Sir Hudson Lowe's second son, the late Major-General Edward William Lowe, married a daughter of Colonel Jackson. This statement actually finds a place in the notice of Major-General Lowe in the *Dictionary of National*

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*Biography*, but it is a pure fabrication, and has naturally caused much pain to the widow of General Lowe, who is still living. It is a matter of fact that Major-General Lowe never even met Miss Jackson. As already noticed, directly after Sir Hudson Lowe's death in January 1844, Colonel Jackson wrote "A Slight Tribute to the Memory of Sir Hudson Lowe," which appeared in the *United Service Magazine* for March of that year. In 1877 he wrote "Notes and Reminiscences of a Staff Officer, chiefly relating to the Waterloo Campaign and to St. Helena matters during the captivity of Napoleon," from which I have quoted under the title of *Waterloo and St. Helena*. It is an amusing and interesting book, but unfortunately was published only for private circulation, and is consequently little known to the public. As regards Sir H. Lowe, the tone of these reminiscences is the same as that of the article written thirty-three

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years earlier. I shall have to quote again from this small volume. Meantime I give his description of the Governor of St. Helena as he appeared in 1816: "He stood 5 ft. 7 in., spare in make, having good features, fair hair, and eyebrows overhanging his eyes; his look denoted penetration and firmness, his manner rather abrupt, his gait quick, his look and general demeanour indicative of energy and decision. He was warm and steady in his friendships, and popular both with the inhabitants of the isle and the troops." Another witness, still more independent if possible than Colonel Basil Jackson, inasmuch as he never saw Sir Hudson Lowe till they met at St. Helena, is Mr. Walter Henry, Assistant-Surgeon of the 66th Regiment, who arrived in July 1817 and remained till the end. He was present at the *post-mortem* examination of Napoleon and sailed to England with

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the French. I have already quoted  
from his book, *Events of a Military  
Life*. He thus writes generally of the  
Governor :

“The Governor appeared to be much occupied with the cares and duties of his important and responsible office, and looked very like a person who would not let his prisoner escape if he could help it. From first impressions I entertained an opinion of him far from favourable ; if therefore, notwithstanding this prepossession, my testimony should incline to the other side, I can truly state that the change took place from the weight of evidence, and in consequence of what came under my own observation in St. Helena. Since that time he has encountered a storm of obloquy and reproach enough to bow any person to the earth ; yet I firmly believe that the talent he exerted in unravelling the intricate plotting constantly going on at Longwood, and the firmness in tearing it to pieces, with the unceasing vigilance he displayed in the discharge of his arduous and invidious duties, made him more enemies than any hastiness of temper, uncourteousness of demeanour, or severity in his measures.

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of which the world was taught to believe him guilty." \*

Mr. Henry's evidence is quite opposed to O'Meara's, although he was on very friendly terms with that individual until he lost his character. However, his experiences at St. Helena, being merely an episode in his life and adventures, cannot from the nature of the case be as much known as they would have been if separately published. The evidence of these two gentlemen alone is sufficient to overthrow the gigantic fabric of fraud and misrepresentation which has for so many years done duty with the world, and more especially with the British public, as the true history of Napoleon at St. Helena. I will, however, bring forward another witness. In 1876 the *St. James's Magazine* published a series of papers purporting to be written by one Stewart, a pretended con-

\* Henry, ii. pp. 9, 10.

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fidential servant of Napoleon. "They are a series of ridiculous falsehoods," says Colonel Jackson. The late Admiral Rous, who was on the station at St. Helena during part of this period, and to whom reference is made in these papers, wrote to Colonel Jackson as follows, under date July 22, 1876: "The account of Napoleon at St. Helena is a tissue of falsehoods. . . . I do not believe either Lowe or Reade [Sir Thomas Reade] was capable of performing any act derogatory to the character of a gentleman. To the best of my knowledge, all reports of ill-treatment to Napoleon were systematic falsehoods, fabricated with a view of keeping alive a sympathy in Europe to enable his friends to succeed in obtaining a more agreeable exile."\*

It now becomes my duty to deal with the specific charges, which I hope the reader may be disposed to regard *upon*

\* *Waterloo and St. Helena*, pp. 117, 118.

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*their merits.* But before coming to them it may be as well to say a few words (1) on the personal character of Sir H. Lowe, and (2) on certain special difficulties with which he had to contend. First then, I will at once allow that Sir Hudson Lowe was not a perfect character. He had his failings, of course, like every one else. He felt keenly, perhaps too keenly, the responsibility of his position. The peace of the world, he was told, depended on the faithful execution of his trust. "There is only one thing now to look after, and that rests with you," was the refrain continually dinned into his ears. He needed no arguments to convince him of the importance of his charge, and was sometimes almost pedantic in his adherence to the letter of his instructions. He was constantly referring the most trivial matters to the home authorities—even some matters of which he, being on the spot, was a far more

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competent judge than they could be. His correspondence shows an almost nervous anxiety to put things right. The determination of Napoleon to hold no personal intercourse with the Governor caused difficulties which might have been explained in a moment, but which, when set forth in the diplomatic style affected by Las Cases, Bertrand, or Montholon, assumed formidable proportions. This is a real defect. If the Governor had possessed a little more of the bluntness of Sir George Cockburn he could not, it is true, have satisfied Napoleon and his attendants (no one could have done that), but he would have spared himself a good deal of worry. Again, he certainly showed a want of tact in some of his dealings with Napoleon. When the Emperor persistently refused to recognise the title of "General Bonaparte," the only one by which the British Government would allow him to be



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addressed, it is hardly likely that he would have accepted an invitation to dinner from the Governor to "General Bonaparte." This invitation to meet the Countess of Loudon, though made with the best intentions, was clearly a mistake, and it is no wonder that Napoleon regarded it as an insult. Again, near the close of his life Napoleon presented to the officers of the 20th Regiment, to which his then medical attendant, Dr. Arnott, belonged, Coxe's *Life of Marlborough*, which had been given to him by the Hon. Robert Spencer. Unfortunately, the Imperial title was written inside the books. On this account, though Sir Hudson Lowe did not forbid the acceptance of the volumes, he certainly discouraged it, and they were not accepted. Upon this incident one must agree with the remarks of Mr. Forsyth: "I cannot help thinking that Napoleon's kindly-meant present might, under all the circumstances,

Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon have been accepted, notwithstanding the style of Emperor was inscribed in the volumes. He did not send them as coming from 'the Emperor,' nor write the objectionable title in them ; nor was there much likelihood of a British regiment being seduced from its allegiance by adding to its library a few books, the gift of Napoleon. It does not appear that he ever heard of the fate of his present ; but if he had there is no doubt that he would have felt what had happened as a deliberate insult."

There is also a consensus of opinion that the Governor's manner was abrupt and reserved, even in the judgment of those most favourably disposed towards him. His son says of him : " In speaking he was frequently embarrassed for words ; and in society alternated very much between extreme taciturnity and vehement animation of discourse. Even the greatest excitement, however, scarcely made his

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diction fluent."\* This, however, is about all that can fairly be urged against Sir Hudson Lowe. And what does it amount to? Such slight matters as are only mentioned in a minute scrutiny of character.

Secondly, besides the difficulties inherent in his position, Sir Hudson Lowe had others which seem to have been added as a wanton aggravation. Three foreign Commissioners were sent to St. Helena by the Governments of France, Russia, and Austria (Prussia did not send one). They were, however, not merely useless but a great source of annoyance to the Governor. Ostensibly they helped to guard Napoleon, but as England had undertaken that duty and would naturally not be interfered with, they had nothing in the world to do except to pass their time, which they did partly by enjoying the hospitality of the Governor and partly by engaging in intrigues against

\* *United Service Magazine*, June, 1844, p. 295.

Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon the Governor's authority with the French attendants of the Emperor. They transmitted reports to their respective Governments, but as Napoleon would not receive them in their official capacity, and as Sir Hudson Lowe would not allow them to be presented as private individuals, they had not much of importance to transmit. Lord Bathurst urged Sir Hudson Lowe to encourage the Commissioners "to amuse themselves by going to the Cape by way of change of scene," and Napoleon himself exclaimed : "What folly it is to send those Commissioners out here without charge or responsibility! They will have nothing to do but to walk about the streets and creep up the rocks." Of the Austrian Commissioner, Baron Stürmer, and how his career was terminated, I have already spoken. Count Balmain, the representative of Russia, was recalled at the end of the three years for which he was appointed. Before he left

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he married Miss Charlotte Johnson, Lady Lowe's eldest daughter by her first husband. The Marquis de Montchenu, the French Commissioner, remained to the end and was the least objectionable of the three. He is described as "pompous and harmless." Colonel Jackson says he was fond of going out to whist parties, but seldom invited others to his own house. From this circumstance he acquired the sobriquet of "le Marquis de Monter-chez-nous."\* Mr. Henry gives an amusing account of how he attended the Marquis during an illness, for which he thought he had a right to expect some pecuniary fee. But the excellent Marquis gave him something much more valuable in the shape of a note—of thanks, which is printed in full as a model for future Commissioners who may wish to pay their doctors economically and yet hand-

\* *Waterloo and St. Helena*, p. 91.

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somely. "Who," he adds, "would exchange such a letter for a gold snuffbox? I am quite certain that I never shall." Incidentally Mr. Henry here testifies to the Governor's kindness of heart. The Marquis was recommended change of air. "As soon as Sir Hudson Lowe heard this he invited him to Plantation House; and I rode there to see him two or three times a week until his health became perfectly re-established." Again, Mr. O'Meara, the surgeon of Napoleon, should have been put in precisely the same position as the French attendants. They were forbidden to send or receive letters except such as were first seen by the Governor. This order of the British Government was peremptory. The same restriction should have been placed upon the surgeon. As it was, he could correspond how and with whom he chose. If this simple precaution had been

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observed an infinity of mischief would have been prevented.

But the worst of all, and the thing which put so much power into the hands of O'Meara, was the conduct of the British Government, which, viewed in itself, was utterly undignified: viewed from Sir Hudson Lowe's standpoint, was unfair and treacherous. As I have said before, O'Meara carried on a regular correspondence with Mr. Finlaison of the Admiralty, and was encouraged by Cabinet Ministers to write copious letters of gossip about Napoleon for the amusement of themselves and the Prince Regent! It is true Sir Hudson was informed of this after it had gone on for a long time, but it utterly stultified the express instructions of the Government as to correspondence. Thus O'Meara was emboldened to defy the authority of Sir Hudson Lowe, and if it had not been for his own infatuation he might have

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done so to the end. Mr. Henry's remarks on this are worth quoting. He says :

“I have been informed since, on authority which I cannot doubt, that Mr. O'Meara had a friend in London, the private secretary of Lord M[elvi]lle, who found it convenient to have a correspondent in St. Helena, then a highly interesting spot, who should give him all the gossip of the island for the First Lord of the Admiralty, to be sported in a higher circle afterwards for the Prince Regent's amusement. The patronage of Lord M. was thus secured ; and Mr. O'Meara, confident on this backing, stood out stiffly against Sir Hudson Lowe. The latter was quite ignorant of this intrigue against the proper exercise of his authority ; and when he discovered it afterwards he found it was a delicate matter to meddle with, involving the conduct of a Cabinet Minister, and affecting, possibly, the harmony of the Ministry. Even after the development of the vile poisoning charge against the Governor, the influence of the First Lord was exerted to screen O'Meara, but in vain ; for Lord Liverpool exclaimed, as in another well-known instance of a very different description, “It is too bad !”\*

\* Henry, ii. p. 43.



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Thus, while one Cabinet Minister was writing to Sir Hudson Lowe commending him for his vigilance, and urging particular care to prevent clandestine correspondence, another Cabinet Minister was doing all he could to undermine the Governor's authority by encouraging a clandestine correspondence! I do not think Mr. Forsyth has made enough of this. What Governor ever before had at the same time to fight against open foes and treacherous friends? Fortunately for others, especially for the British Government, O'Meara was the sort of man who, if given enough rope, would be sure to hang himself; and so it proved. The Government did not, therefore, reap the full consequences of their own folly. It is certainly no thanks to *them* that Napoleon did not effect his escape.

Sir Hudson Lowe was too loyal to make any formal complaint, but a consciousness of the unfair position in which

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he was placed is evident in a memorial to Lord Liverpool which he drew up in 1824. It is indeed incredible, as Sir Hudson Lowe there remarks, that the members of the Government who enjoyed O'Meara's gossip intended in the first instance that he should be the medium of communication to them of important state information. Yet O'Meara saw his advantage and immediately seized it. He delivered up to Sir Hudson Lowe a letter written by Count Montholon (the celebrated "Remonstrance") which had been left in his room for the purpose of being sent home to be published in the *Morning Chronicle*, and of which he said to the Governor that he intended to make no other use than to take extracts from it for a friend in the Admiralty. He also exhibited a letter marked "secret and confidential," encouraging his correspondence, but not communications of this kind. The

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Governor then cautioned him upon his correspondence with any individual upon matters of so delicate a nature, and added that the Governor himself was the proper channel for communications to His Majesty's Ministers. The merit would not be less his, as any information he might give would be conveyed in his own name. In spite of this, however, O'Meara resolved on a continuance of his communications, and, in order to obtain a guarantee for them, boldly made known the injunctions that had been laid upon him by Sir Hudson Lowe, and his arguments for disobeying them, and actually transmitted at the same time a copy of the very letter he had delivered up to Sir Hudson Lowe! Two months later he sent a still fuller communication, repeated the injunctions of Sir Hudson Lowe, and resolved to bring the question to an issue, "as to the approbation or otherwise that might be

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bestowed upon the continuance of his opposition in so important a point to the officer under whose authority he was placed." The replies to that letter were decisive as to the nature of Sir Hudson Lowe's future relations, not only with O'Meara himself, but with Napoleon (who had the wires thus placed in his own hands), with his followers, with the foreign Commissioners, to whom their purport must have been secretly communicated, and in short with all descriptions of persons whom there was any object in letting into the secret. "Words cannot convey," continues the Governor, "in more precise terms the approbation bestowed on the conduct of the person written to. It is unnecessary to say that this unfortunate proceeding rendered ten-fold more difficult the execution of Sir Hudson Lowe's duties at St. Helena, and made it almost impossible for him to come

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to any right understanding with the persons under his charge—secretly stripped him of one of the chief attributes of his authority, while leaving him still the responsible person for the mischief which might spring from such interference with it.”

In considering the charges against Sir Hudson Lowe, a clear distinction must be drawn between the acts of the British Government, in carrying out which the Governor was acting officially, and the personal acts of Sir Hudson Lowe. The first thing is the climate of St. Helena itself. It is “common form” with many French writers to assume that one of the objects the British Government had in sending Napoleon there was that he might be “assassinated” by the climate, which (they professed to think) would kill him in a few years. I verily believe this is the only charge made on behalf of the Emperor in which Sir Hudson Lowe is not involved.

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Not even *his* malignity could affect the climate of St. Helena. All medical testimony is distinctly opposed to the notion that St. Helena is unhealthy, the death-rate being remarkably low. "For a tropical climate, only fifteen degrees from the Line, St. Helena is certainly a healthy island," writes Mr. Henry, "if not the most healthy of this description in the world. During one period of twelve months, we did not lose one man by disease out of four hundred of the 66th quartered at Deadwood (the camp near Longwood)." But this point is hardly worth labouring, because Las Cases says in his journal that Napoleon remarked to him : "After all, as a place of exile, perhaps St. Helena was the best. In high latitudes we should have suffered greatly from cold, and in any other island of the tropics we should have expired miserably under the scorching rays of the sun. This rock is

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wild and barren no doubt ; the climate is monstrous and unwholesome ; but the temperature, it must be confessed, is mild." In accordance with the curious fatality that attends the charges brought in connexion with the exile of Napoleon, we have French evidence as to the desirability of St. Helena as a place in which to settle. In a report published in 1804 at Paris, *by order of the First Consul*, St. Helena was called a terrestrial paradise, where the air was pure and the sky serene, where health shone in every countenance, and diseases contracted in India were immediately cured. As to the death of Napoleon, all the doctors who attended the *post-mortem* examination certified that the disease of which the Emperor died was cancer of the stomach—a disease which, I need hardly say, is unaffected by climate. O'Meara was absolutely wrong in his diagnosis of "chronic hepatitis," and it is

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a very remarkable fact *that it was owing to the good condition of the liver that life was preserved so long.* "The liver acted as a kind of cork or stopper to the opening in the coat of the stomach formed by the ulcer, and prevented the escape of the contents of the stomach, which must have caused immediate death."\*

If Napoleon was to be detained at St. Helena certain measures had to be taken to prevent his escape, and also to prevent communications with adherents in Europe or elsewhere, who might form conspiracies and raise revolutions. The instructions of the British Government to Sir Hudson Lowe are contained in a despatch of Sept. 12, 1815, of which it is necessary to quote only the following passage: "You will observe that the desire of His Majesty's Government is to allow every indulgence

\* Forsyth, iii. 293, and Dr. Shortt's evidence there quoted.



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to General Bonaparte which may be compatible with the entire security of his person: that he should not by any means escape, or hold communication with any person whatever (excepting through your agency), must be your unremitted care; and these points being made sure, every resource and amusement which may serve to reconcile Bonaparte to his confinement may be permitted." Sir Hudson Lowe considered these the two leading points of his instructions—personal security and the prevention of unauthorised communication. It is generally represented that the restrictions imposed were unnecessarily harsh, and that they were rendered much more intolerable by the harshness and brutality of the Governor in carrying them out. An examination will show that as regards the Governor the precise opposite was the case. The harshness of the restrictions, such as it was, was much miti-

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gated by the kindness and consideration of Sir Hudson Lowe, and the nearest approach to a rebuke that he ever received from the Government was owing to his not insisting sufficiently upon their instructions being obeyed. The Marquis de Montchenu, the French Commissioner, complained to his Government of the lenity of Sir Hudson Lowe,\* and General Gourgaud said at St. Helena to the Russian Commissioner that if he had been in the Governor's situation he would have acted with more rigour. "I would have confined them more closely; he [*i.e.*, Sir Hudson Lowe] has good right to complain [of the manner in which Napoleon conducted himself]."† In October 1820

\* His despatches to the French Government are contained in the French archives and were there found by M. Georges Firmin Didot some years ago. Since then M. Didot has published the book mentioned in the Bibliography at the end of this volume.

† "Je les aurais bloqués plus étroitement: il a cause de se plaindre," Forsyth, ii. 190.

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H.M.S. *Owen Glendower*, commanded by the Hon. Robert Spencer, arrived at St. Helena. Captain Spencer arrived prepossessed in Napoleon's favour and believing that he was harshly treated, but before quitting the island he quite changed his opinion and said to the Governor that "if the precautions erred in any way, it was more on the side of indulgence than unnecessary restraint."

The principal specific instructions of the Government were the following :—

(1) *That Napoleon was not to be allowed the title of Emperor, but was always to be styled General Bonaparte.* This was from first to last a source of endless discomfort and difficulty. Certainly the British Government were quite justified in their refusal to allow the title of Emperor to one whom they had not recognised as such in the height of his prosperity, and Sir Walter Scott strenuously defends

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them, but it is just because they had refused the title to the Emperor *then* that they could afford to be generous *now*. I am, therefore, of the opinion of Mr. Henry and Mr. Forsyth that it is a point which might have been conceded without loss of dignity. The latter observes : " It seemed puerile in us to ignore a title by which he will be known in history as certainly as Augustus or Charlemagne. It cannot be urged that to recognise Napoleon as Emperor would have been to abandon the cause of the Bourbons, for we had previously concluded the treaty of Amiens with him as the *de facto* ruler of France ; and we had no right to impose either a king or a form of government upon that country." However this may be, all the odium of insisting upon this point fell upon Sir Hudson Lowe, who had no choice in the matter. We cannot be surprised that Napoleon himself and

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his attendants always insisted upon the title of "Emperor," and Sir Hudson Lowe was often obliged to return letters and other documents to them in consequence. Soon after the arrival of Sir Hudson Lowe, all Napoleon's suite and servants had to sign a declaration of submission to the terms on which they were to be allowed to remain on the island, and the Government allowed them to refer to Napoleon as the "Emperor." In consequence of this all the declarations were sent back by Government and had to be signed over again without any mention of the obnoxious title. There was then some theatrical display, Napoleon's suite at first declaring that they would rather be sent away than submit to such a degradation, as they professed to consider it. However, when they found that Sir Hudson Lowe was not to be trifled with on this point they gave in, General Gourgaud setting

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the example, much to the relief of  
Napoleon.\*

(2) *That no letters or packets were to be sent or received by the French unless they were first seen by Sir Hudson Lowe.* This restriction was most vexatious, and, after all, useless. Sir Walter Scott observes most truly that when this restriction was placed upon *all* communications any person would feel a certain amount of sympathy, and be disposed to aid the exiles by conveying letters, &c., while if they had been allowed to make use of the ordinary post it would have been found much more difficult to prevail on people to convey letters secretly. But the chief objection is the fatal one that the regulation could not possibly be thoroughly carried out, and we know that the French never had any difficulty in carrying on a correspondence with Europe. Countess Bertrand on the voyage home

\* Forsyth, i. 327.

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frankly stated this to Mr. Henry, and General Gourgaud before his departure said to Major Gorrequer, the Governor's Military Secretary, "I might if I wished have sent away every week a packet to England." Captain Ripley, of H.E.I.C. ship *Regent*, who landed at St. Helena in May 1819, stated that he was offered £600 if he would be the bearer of a letter from the French to Europe. But I need not multiply instances, as the fact is undisputed, and the French used to boast of it. In October 1817 Napoleon wrote some remarks upon a speech of Lord Bathurst which had been recently made in the House of Lords in answer to one of Lord Holland moving for documents to show the treatment of Napoleon at St. Helena. On this occasion Sir Hudson Lowe departed from his instructions and allowed a sealed packet to be sent to Lord Liverpool, although he knew (or rather *because* he

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knew) that it contained complaints against himself. The French, however, scarcely appreciated the delicacy of his conduct, for at the same time they sent clandestinely a copy of the "Remarks" to be published in England on arrival. "Thus," says Mr. Forsyth, "the poison of calumny was disseminated abroad long before Sir Hudson Lowe ever knew, much less could reply to, the charges that were brought against him." Napoleon, it is well known, had immense pecuniary resources in Europe, and it is quite possible that by a correspondence he might have caused another revolution. I cannot, therefore, quite agree with Sir Walter Scott that the object aimed at by preventing clandestine correspondence might have been secured in some other way. I see no way by which this object could absolutely have been attained. It was a risk that had to be run.

(3) *That Napoleon should be seen by the*



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*orderly officer twice within the twenty-four hours, and that after nightfall sentinels should be placed round the house.* It is obvious that there was no duty more difficult to carry out than the instruction that Napoleon should be seen by the orderly officer, and yet none that was of more importance for the security of his person. Sir Walter Scott considers that if this order were strictly enforced nearly all the others might have been neglected. Napoleon and his attendants systematically threw every obstacle in the way of the unfortunate orderly officer, and Sir Hudson Lowe often had to be content with very indirect evidence of the presence of Napoleon at Longwood, and sometimes days passed without his being seen at all. In spite of the extra pay, no officer was willing to hold this position longer than he could help. As to one of them (Captain Blakeney), O'Meara in his long letter to the Admiralty

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stated that he had long been weary of a situation in which his "honourable feelings and sentiments were wounded by Sir Hudson Lowe's having required him to make a report of the conversation and action of the persons with whom he daily sat down to table in that confidence always existing amongst brother officers." This, however, is only one of O'Meara's misstatements. Captain Blakeney himself wrote to Count Bertrand and stigmatised a similar statement as "false" and an "infamous calumny," and said he resigned because his situation deprived him of the society of his brother officers. His brother officers of the 66th also signed a declaration that they had never heard Captain Blakeney make use of any of the expressions attributed to him, or any words to that effect. Very amusing accounts are given by Captain Nicholls, though not perhaps so amusing to him, of the shifts to which he

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was put to carry out this irksome duty. He mentions being on his feet as much as ten hours at a time in order to get a glimpse of the Emperor. He says, for instance, one day that he caught a sight of him while he was strapping his razor. On another he saw the top of a cocked hat moving about which he presumed to be Napoleon's. Once, when he applied to Count Montholon for help, the Count suggested that he could see him through the keyhole! At length Lord Bathurst lost patience, and wrote that if Napoleon's system of seclusion continued, Sir Hudson Lowe must "adopt some compulsory mode of learning a fact indispensable to the prevention of his escape." It is one thing to write despatches from Downing Street and another to carry them out at St. Helena, and in spite of all the trouble that was given on this point, Sir Hudson Lowe never did have recourse to any compulsory measure. As to the post-

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ing of sentinels after sunset, Lord Bathurst made an effective answer to Lord Holland's complaint on that head. He said in his speech :

“Sentinels were stationed there after sunset, and Napoleon had expressed his dislike to walk when he was thus watched. Sir H. Lowe, with every desire to attend to his wishes, after that fixed the sentinels in places where they would not look on him. Would their Lordships wish these sentinels to be removed altogether, just at the time when it was most likely that he should escape? Let them suppose for a moment that, instead of debating on the motion of the noble Lord, intelligence was brought them by Sir Hudson Lowe that General Bonaparte had actually escaped. Let them suppose that, instead of sitting to discuss whether a little more or little less restriction should be imposed, they had thus to examine Sir Hudson Lowe at their bar. How and when did he escape?—In the early part of the evening, and from his garden. Had his garden no sentinels?—The sentinels were removed. Why were they removed?—General Bonaparte desired it—they were hurtful to his feelings; they were then removed, and thus was he enabled to escape.

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What would their Lordships think of such an answer? He begged them to consider the situation of Sir Hudson Lowe, in what a painful and invidious station he was placed. If General Bonaparte escaped, the character and fortune of Sir Hudson Lowe were ruined for ever; and if no attempts were made to effect that escape, there would not be wanting some, from false motives of compassion, to reproach him for those restrictions which had probably prevented those attempts from being made."

(4) *That the best house on the island should be assigned to Napoleon, with the exception of Plantation House, the country residence of the Governor.* I admit at once that it would have been better if Plantation House had been given up to Napoleon, but the orders of Government were positive, and Sir Hudson Lowe had to carry them out. Longwood was the next best house, the residence of the Lieutenant-Governor. Napoleon had himself selected it when riding with Sir George

\* Speech in the House of Lords, March 18, 1817.

## Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon

Cockburn, soon after his arrival in the island. Materials were sent out from England for the purpose of constructing a new house. When the materials came to hand, Sir Hudson Lowe wrote to Napoleon asking whether he would like to have a new house erected, or additions made to the old one. Receiving no answer, the Governor went personally to wait upon the Emperor and obtain his decision. The only answer he could get was that the Emperor would prefer a new house, but that it would take five or six years to build, and he knew he would not be so long on the island. Sir Hudson Lowe then proceeded to make alterations in the old house, but Napoleon disapproved of this, though it was done for the purpose of lodging his attendants. One cannot object, of course, to Napoleon's having a choice either of the new house or the old one, or between alterations and no alterations, but the objection is that he

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made every attempt to improve his residence the foundation of a charge against Sir Hudson Lowe, and that he watched the moment when attention was being paid to his wishes to make that attention a source of complaint. For the summer of 1817, with a view to secure Napoleon's comfort, Sir Hudson Lowe applied to Miss Mason, a lady who lived at a house called Pleasant Mount, which had shady trees and water. She was willing to let it for £100 a month, and Sir Hudson Lowe at once wrote to Count Bertrand stating the advantages of the situation, and telling him that if Napoleon would accept the house it was at his disposal for the summer months. *To this letter no answer was ever returned.* At length, when it was obvious that there was no prospect of his recall, Napoleon did condescend to examine plans for a new house, which was actually completed a short time before his death,

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though, in consequence of his illness, never occupied by him. There was an iron railing some distance from the house, of the simple kind that is often put up before houses in England. It could not be seen from the house, but Napoleon took a dislike to it and said it formed an "iron cage." Sir Hudson Lowe immediately ordered it to be discontinued, and, subsequently ascertaining that the objection was not so much against the railing itself as against its too great proximity to the house, he had it placed further back. Near the end of his life Napoleon conveyed to Sir Hudson Lowe through Count Montholon his thanks to the British Government for having caused such a house to be built for him and to Sir Hudson Lowe himself for the pains he had taken in its construction.

(5) *That certain limits should be assigned within which Napoleon should be*



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*at liberty to walk or ride unattended.*

Under Sir George Cockburn a circuit of twelve miles was allowed within which Napoleon might walk or ride unattended, while he might go anywhere on the island attended by a British officer. Surely the limit of twelve miles was ample. It is true that for a time Sir Hudson Lowe made some modification in this arrangement, but as this is a matter rather personal to the Governor than connected with his instructions from home, I will deal with it later. The limits to be fixed were left to the Governor, the Government only stipulating that there should be some limits, and that these should be reasonable.

These were the principal instructions of the British Government. With regard to the first three, Sir Hudson Lowe actually relaxed them, and had to defend his conduct to the home authorities for so doing. As to the fourth, Napoleon at last

Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon admitted the pains which the Governor took to consult his comfort. The fifth I postpone for the moment. And yet all these relaxations were represented by the French as "caprice"!

On this point Sir Hudson Lowe writes, not without dignity and pathos: "When you have found me accused of some atrocious cruelty, harshness, or injustice, be assured such has not merely not been committed, but that it is more than probable I have been guilty of some act of indulgence or attention on the very occasion diametrically opposite to that of which I have been accused."\*

I will now come to the charges against Sir Hudson Lowe not so immediately connected with his instructions, and of a personal rather than official nature. None of them present any difficulty.

(1) *That Napoleon was on comparatively*

\* From an unpublished letter.

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*good terms with Sir George Cockburn, and that therefore it must have been the fault of Sir Hudson Lowe that Napoleon took such a vehement dislike to him.* After the Admiral left this was constantly said by Napoleon and his attendants, but as long as he was acting Governor Napoleon could hardly say anything bad enough about him. I have already quoted the language in which he anticipated the arrival of Sir Hudson Lowe. When the Admiral refused to forward sealed packets to England, Napoleon burst out: "Who is the Admiral? I never heard his name mentioned as conquering in a battle, either singly or in general action. 'Tis true he has rendered his name infamous in America, which I heard of, and he will now render it so here on this detestable rock. I believe, however, that he is a good sailor. Next to your Government exiling me here the worst thing they could have done, and the

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Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon most insufferable to my feelings, is sending me with such a man as *him!*" \* At another time he is represented as saying: "In fact, I expect nothing less from your Government than that they will send out an executioner to despatch me. They send me here to a horrible rock, where even the water is not good; they send out a *sailor* with me who does not know how to treat a man like me, and who puts a *camp* under my nose, so that I cannot put my head out without seeing my jailors. Here we are treated like felons; a proclamation issued for nobody to come near or touch us, as if we were so many lepers or had the itch!" † Napoleon's feeling against the Admiral is also shown by the fact that he attributed the choice of an unusually early hour for the first interview with Sir Hudson Lowe to a desire on Sir George Cockburn's

\* From a letter of O'Meara to Mr. Finlaison, dated March 16, 1816, given by Forsyth, i. pp. 66 foll.

† *Ibid.*

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part to embroil him with the new Governor. It was plainly the object of Napoleon and his suite to play off Sir Hudson Lowe against Sir George Cockburn, and when the latter had gone, then Sir George Cockburn against Sir Hudson Lowe.

(2) *That Sir Hudson Lowe innovated upon the arrangements made by Sir George Cockburn and frequently even changed his own regulations.* This is what has caused Sir Walter Scott, writing on imperfect information, to speak of the Governor's "want of steadiness of purpose," and if it were really the case that the Governor *did* frequently alter his regulations he would certainly have shown himself to be an unfit person for the important post he occupied. But what are the facts? As we have seen, the original limits within which Napoleon could walk or ride unattended embraced a circuit of twelve miles. In October 1816 Sir Hudson Lowe cut off from it a ravine

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where were some cottages. This also cut off a road on the other side of the ravine. As, however, Napoleon complained bitterly of not being allowed to ride along a road which, when it was open to him, he had never once made use of, Sir Hudson soon withdrew the regulation and restored the road to the limits. Every subsequent change, as Mr. Forsyth shows, was in Napoleon's favour, and more and more space was afterwards accorded to him, until even Montholon warmly thanked Sir Hudson Lowe for what he had done for them. All that is required to vindicate Sir Hudson Lowe from the charge of vacillation in this matter is to state the facts. On two other points it cannot be denied that there had been a certain amount of laxity on the part of Sir George Cockburn, and Sir Hudson Lowe had to insist on a stricter carrying out of Government's instructions. Sir George Cockburn

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was only in charge from October 1815 to April 1816, and himself admitted that if he had been staying longer he should have drawn the reins a little tighter, inasmuch as he saw some of the evils that were accruing. In Sir George Cockburn's time the sentinels were drawn round the house at nine o'clock. Now, as there was (on an average) an interval of three hours between sunset and nine o'clock, and as this interval gave an opportunity for eluding the vigilance of the guards, Sir Hudson Lowe had the sentinels posted at sunset ; but, with that deference to the susceptibilities of Napoleon which he always manifested, the sentinels were drawn only round the garden at sunset, and not round the house till nine. Again, it had been permitted by Sir George Cockburn that passes signed by Bertrand only should give access to Longwood, and also an invitation to dinner sent by Count

## Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon

Bertrand to any person who had been presented to Napoleon should be received by the guard as a pass. It was obvious that this permission was liable to abuse, and that under cover of it sealed communications might pass. And so it proved, for Count Bertrand soon asserted that Sir George Cockburn had authorised a sealed correspondence. Sir George Cockburn himself told Sir Hudson Lowe that if he had foreseen that Count Bertrand's house at Longwood would have been so long in construction (he lived at first at Hutt's Gate, about two miles from Longwood) he would not have given this latitude. These are all the changes that were made by Sir Hudson Lowe, and it will be seen that they were made partly in order to comply more strictly with definite instructions, partly to mitigate, as far as he could, the inconvenience of the situation of the exiles.

(3) *That Sir Hudson Lowe was harsh*



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*in temper and coarse in language.* These charges are made against the Governor, especially as regards his interviews with Napoleon. From what has been written on this subject it might be thought that Sir Hudson Lowe was in the habit of riding to Longwood once or twice a week for the purpose of abusing and maltreating the captive Emperor. But, as already remarked, there were only five interviews between them altogether, and it was only at the last three that any stormy scenes occurred. The third interview was mostly taken up by Napoleon with abuse of Sir Hudson Lowe, and he admitted afterwards to Las Cases : “ I behaved very ill to him no doubt. However, the Governor proved himself very insensible to my severity ; his delicacy did not seem wounded by it. I should have liked to have seen him evince a little anger or pull the door violently after him when he went away.” In other

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words, as Mr. Forsyth puts it, the Governor behaved with dignity and forbearance during this explosion of bad temper on the part of Napoleon. The fourth interview was much of the same nature as the third, Napoleon spending most of it in abuse; but the fifth and last, on August 18, 1816, was the most violent exhibition of Napoleon's manners. He positively exhausted the vocabulary of insult and vituperation. At this interview Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm was present, and the Emperor had recourse to the peculiarly irritating trick of abusing a man in his presence but in language addressed to a third person, for nearly all of what he said was to the Admiral. It was at this interview that he called Sir Hudson a *sbirro Siciliano* (a Sicilian thieftaker). Napoleon himself afterwards admitted that his own conduct had been as offensive as possible, and did the justice to acknowledge that Sir Hudson

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Lowe had never shown him any want of respect, that the only thing noticeable was the abrupt way in which he had retired, while the Admiral withdrew with numerous salutations. And this is all, that after being subjected to a torrent of unmerited abuse Sir Hudson Lowe withdrew without a bow! The coolness with which Sir Hudson Lowe bore his insults increased Napoleon's anger, for he said: "This is the second time in my life that I have spoilt my affairs with the English. Their phlegm leads me on and I say more than I ought."\* It was at this interview that the Governor is said to have laid his hand on his sword—a fable which not only Sir Hudson Lowe indignantly denied, but of which O'Meara also says that he knew it to be incorrect. The real grievance of Napoleon was clearly that he could not make the Governor lose command of

\* "Leur flegme me laisse aller." Forsyth, i. 256.

## Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon

his temper, that his demeanour was imperturbable. It is perfectly true that, as Lord Bathurst reminded Sir Hudson Lowe, no language of Napoleon, in the situation in which he was, could be regarded as an insult ; but, however much that may be the case, things can be said which it requires extraordinary self-control not to resent. Napoleon was of course fully aware of this, and used his privilege to the full. On the evening of that day Lieutenant Jackson was dining with the Admiral, who spoke freely of the interview, and bore willing testimony to the cool replies and admirable forbearance of Sir Hudson Lowe.\* It is admitted by his son that Sir Hudson Lowe's temper was *naturally* "violent and hasty enough"†—all the greater credit to him then for his admirable self-

\* From a letter of Colonel Jackson to Mr. Henry, see Henry, ii. 58.

† "Memoir," *United Service Magazine*, June, 1844.

## At St. Helena

control. It is right to state that in an unpublished memorandum made long after, Sir Hudson Lowe writes : “ It is but justice to Napoleon to observe that he was never so very coarse and rude in his manner or language as he has been represented to have been : many a lie has thus been fathered upon him.” Finally, to dispose of these charges, I will quote from a letter of Colonel Jackson to Mr. Henry, provoked by Mr. Henry’s having, in his first edition, made some remark about Sir Hudson Lowe’s temper on the authority of O’Meara, which in the second edition he withdrew on ascertaining that O’Meara’s statement was unworthy of credit, while at the same time he says for himself that, during four years’ acquaintance with Sir Hudson Lowe, “the demeanour of this much-injured man was always gentlemanly and courteous, both to myself and all around him.” Colonel Jackson writes as follows :

## Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon

“Few persons, if any, are better acquainted with Sir Hudson Lowe than myself. When he was Quartermaster-General in 1814 and 1815, I was Deputy Assistant in the Department and attached to the office, when I was with him every day, and had indeed more communication with him than others, and sometimes of a confidential character. I also at that time saw him when certain circumstances gave him much annoyance; but cannot recollect any single instance of his breaking out into any unseemly bursts of anger, or showing real uncourteousness. He was very much liked by all who served under him, being at all times kind, considerate, generous, and hospitable. . . Depend upon it the reports spread of Sir Hudson Lowe’s ‘bursts of undignified and reprehensible passion’ were wholly without foundation as regards the persons at Longwood, and most grossly exaggerated as regards ourselves. I have heard Sir George Bingham speak highly of Sir Hudson; your friend, General Nicol, does the same, and, in fact, most of the officers of rank who were at St. Helena, and I cannot remember to have heard any one complain of Sir Hudson’s temper. Like other men, he is liable to the infirmities of our nature; but want of proper self-command has never been one of his defects.”

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Even Sir Walter Scott (in his *Life of Napoleon*), whom no one would ever accuse of unwillingness to do justice to the reputation of another, or suspect of unfairness in the use of materials placed at his command, considers that Sir Hudson Lowe failed in "proper command of temper in his intercourse with Napoleon," and in "steadiness of purpose." On the second point I have already said enough. As to the charge against Sir Hudson Lowe's temper, we must remember that Sir Walter had not the materials for a complete defence. This required an inspection of the minutes made by Major Gorrequer of the conversations held, a comparison of O'Meara's printed narrative with his private letters, and the consideration of many documents in Sir Hudson Lowe's possession which Sir Walter Scott had no opportunity of perusing. Moreover, at the time he wrote, Sir Hudson Lowe was in Ceylon, so he could

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Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon

not consult him personally. It is however impossible to suppose that Sir Walter can have attentively read the correspondence between Lord Bathurst and the Governor of St. Helena, and the other official documents, and weighed their evidence against that of such authors as O'Meara, Las Cases, and Antommarchi. In them there is not a line to warrant the conclusion that Sir Hudson Lowe ever regarded Napoleon as "an object of resentment, and open to retort and retaliation." Sir Archibald Alison's language (in his *History of Europe*) is more unfavourable. He says: "Sir Hudson Lowe, who was appointed to the military command of the island, proved an unhappy selection. His manner was rigid and unaccommodating, and his temper of mind was not such as to soften the distress which the Emperor endured during his detention." Lord Campbell is still more condemnatory in his "Life of Lord Eldon"



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(*Lives of the Chancellors*). He says: "As things were managed, I am afraid it will be said that he (Napoleon) was treated, in the nineteenth century, with the same cruel spirit as the Maid of Orleans was in the fifteenth; and there may be tragedies on the Death of Napoleon, in which Sir Hudson Lowe will be the *sbirro*, and even Lord Eldon may be introduced as the *stern old councillor* who decreed the hero's imprisonment." But these writers had no more means of knowing the truth than what Sir Walter Scott possessed, and it is "impossible not to see that they have all been influenced in their opinions by the assertions of authors, the bitterest enemies of Sir Hudson Lowe, who had hitherto occupied the field of narrative with regard to the events at St. Helena." \* As I have already remarked, all this has been altered since the publication of Mr. Forsyth's book,

\* Forsyth, i. 125.

## Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon

and those who now believe that Sir Hudson Lowe was guilty of harshness of temper and coarseness of language will believe almost anything.

(4) *That Sir Hudson Lowe gradually procured the dismissal of the faithful attendants of Napoleon with the intention of aggravating the prisoner's painful situation and getting him more and more into his power.*

Las Cases, Gourgaud, Bertrand and Montholon were the four principal sharers of Napoleon's exile, and they, together with the surgeon O'Meara, were those most about his person. The circumstances attending the removal of O'Meara have already been narrated, and it has been shown that Sir Hudson Lowe would have endeavoured to procure his removal at an earlier period, had it not been that he was unwilling to remove one to whom the Emperor seemed attached. At the close of 1816 Las Cases was sent away owing

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to the discovery of unauthorised communications by him. I need not go into the details, as they are not in dispute. A servant of Las Cases who was going to Europe was accidentally discovered to have a letter concealed in the lining of his waist-coat. But it is very doubtful whether Las Cases, in spite of his protestations, had any objection to leave Longwood. He had to sail first to the Cape of Good Hope, in accordance with the instructions from England that those who left St. Helena should go first to the Cape, and, in the interval before a ship was ready for him, Sir Hudson Lowe gave him the option of returning to Longwood, but he never availed himself of it. O'Meara says, in a letter to Mr. Finlaison, that in his opinion Las Cases had planned the whole scheme on purpose to be detected, being heartily tired of his residence in the island ; in other words, that (in sporting language) "he

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Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon was riding for a fall." I do not think the evidence goes as far as this, but it is hardly uncharitable to suppose with Colonel Jackson that he was "very glad to get out of the mess," \* in spite of the fact that he was genuinely attached to his master. Sir Hudson Lowe gave him a friendly letter of introduction to Lord Charles Somerset, Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, who thus wrote back some time afterwards, when Las Cases' *Journal* had been published: "The whole of the Count's publication (if it really be his) is so contemptible a performance that I own his wailings and his complaints, as far as they involve myself, are matters perfectly indifferent to me; with regard to his assertions respecting the Cape and his treatment here, I know them to be so absolutely and impudently false that it is not too much to presume that there is

\* Henry, ii. 47.

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not a single correct statement in the whole book." \*

In the beginning of 1818 General Gourgaud of his own accord applied for leave to return to Europe, which was granted. For a long time Napoleon had ceased to be cordial to him. He was hardly on speaking terms with Bertrand, and at open enmity with Montholon. "I used," says Colonel Jackson, "frequently to call and chat with him, when he would often lament his hard fate, and sigh for *La belle France*, for Paris and *les Boulevards*. At length *maladie de pays* got the better of him, and he determined to leave Longwood. Sir Hudson Lowe sent for me, and, having mentioned Gourgaud's wish, asked whether it would be agreeable for me to reside with him until an opportunity should offer for his quitting St. Helena. . . . Accordingly, General Gourgaud and myself were in-

\* Forsyth, iii. 148.

## Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon

stalled in a comfortable house, in which servants and a table were provided for us at the expense of Government. We lived near the residence of the Austrian and Russian Commissioners, whom we occasionally visited, and nothing could exceed the attention and hospitality of Sir Hudson Lowe to General Gourgaud.”\* Colonel Jackson then gives a remarkable instance of the Governor’s generosity :

“In justice to that excellent and grossly maligned individual, Sir Hudson Lowe, I shall now relate a circumstance which I am sure General Gourgaud will be ready to confirm. When the latter removed from Longwood, I accompanied him to the Governor’s residence, when I took an opportunity to leave him and Sir Hudson *tête-à-tête*. Immediately on our riding from Plantation House together, the General broke out into strong exclamations of surprise that Sir Hudson should simply have received his visit as the call of one gentleman upon another, without ever alluding to Longwood during their conversation. ‘I expected,

\* Henry, ii. 48.

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added he, 'that the Governor would have seized with avidity so favourable an occasion as my excited state offered to gather from me some information about the goings on at Longwood. *Je ne reviens pas de mon étonnement, non, je n'en reviens pas.* These expressions of surprise he repeated over and over again during our short ride.\* I may add that I had many opportunities of remarking the really chivalrous delicacy of Sir Hudson in reference to General Gourgaud.

"Although the Emperor and the General did not part the best friends, yet, as it was known at Longwood that the latter was unprovided with funds, a considerable sum was offered to him by Napoleon, and even pressed on his acceptance when leaving Longwood, which he declined to receive. But soon after, when about to embark for England, the poor General found the usual inconveniences of a penniless position, and sent me to Longwood to ask Marshal Bertrand for a loan of two or three hundred pounds. The Marshal declined, saying that the Emperor had offered him a much larger sum, the refusal of which was most disrespectful; but added that

\* The forbearance of Sir Hudson Lowe in not questioning General Gourgaud is nothing remarkable. What is more noticeable is the General's surprise at it.

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even then, if General Gourgaud would accept the Emperor's gift, he would also lend him the sum he asked.

"Gourgaud was a good deal distressed by the refusal of Bertrand, which was quite unexpected, but still declined placing himself under a pecuniary obligation to Napoleon; and would have sailed to England without a shilling but for Sir Hudson Lowe, who, as soon as he learned the circumstances, sent him by note an order for one hundred pounds on his bankers in London."\*

To this letter of Colonel Jackson, Mr. Henry adds: "The honourable traits he gives of Sir Hudson Lowe are in my humble opinion quite in keeping with the true character of that distinguished officer."

Colonel Jackson tells us also that after General Gourgaud's arrival in England he was turned round again by politicians there in favour of Napoleon, who told him that otherwise he would be of no account. "This he did by inditing a letter to Marie Louise in which he inveighed against the treatment

\* Henry, ii. 48-50.



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of Napoleon at the hands of Government and Sir Hudson Lowe, which being duly published, Gourgaud fell to zero in the opinion of all right-minded persons.”\* We have seen in Mr. Henry’s narrative how an attempt was made to bribe him to become *l’homme de l’Empereur*. After the departure of O’Meara, in July 1818, Mr. Stokoe, the surgeon of H.M.S. *Conqueror*, was, at the request of the Longwood people, appointed medical attendant to Napoleon ; but as he was known to be a man of good nature and easy disposition he was strictly charged by the Governor and the Admiral to sign no document whatever without their knowledge and permission. “The new medical attendant,” says Mr. Henry, “like many others, lost his wits in the presence of Napoleon, totally forgot his orders, and signed the first paper that was offered, for which disobedience the

\* *Waterloo and St. Helena*, p. 103.

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Admiral sent him home under arrest." He was afterwards sent back to St. Helena, tried by court-martial, and sentenced to be dismissed the service, though allowed a pension on account of his long services. Of course the Stokoe affair has been made a charge against Sir Hudson Lowe. Next Dr. Verling, of the Royal Artillery, was ordered to take up his abode at Longwood, and after a short time he was offered a very large bribe by Montholon if he would abandon the Governor and attach himself to the Emperor, as O'Meara had done. But Dr. Verling was a man of a different stamp from poor Stokoe. The Count's proposition was indignantly rejected: the doctor mounted his horse and rode to Plantation House, reported the affair to the Governor, and requested to be relieved from a post where he was liable to such an insult. He could not be relieved at the time, and remained

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at Longwood until the arrival of Dr. Antommarchi. So much then for the "removal" of Las Cases, Gourgaud, and Stokoe. Count Bertrand and Montholon remained to the end, and were, as we have seen, on good terms with Sir Hudson Lowe after the death of Napoleon. Bertrand afterwards was so far from supporting the credit of O'Meara's book that he published in the *Constitutionnel* a letter, in which he stated it as due to the memory of Napoleon, to France and to Europe, to declare himself an utter stranger to the conversations reported in *A Voice from St. Helena*.\*

(5) *That enough money was not allowed for the support in proper style of Napoleon and his suite, and that in consequence some of Napoleon's plate had to be broken up and sold to supply the deficiency. If we believe Las Cases, they were in actual*

\* *United Service Magazine*, June 1844, p. 293.

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want of food ; if we believe Napoleon himself, “there had been enough to eat supplied, though not enough to keep a proper table” ; but if we look to the evidence of facts we can believe neither of them. The orders of Government were that the table was to be supplied on the scale of a general of the first rank. Sir Hudson Lowe, finding on his arrival that the amount of £8000 a year allowed by Government for the Longwood establishment was not sufficient, immediately, and on his own responsibility, raised it to £12,000 a year, which, if expenses had been kept within reasonable limits, would have been ample. Anything beyond this was defrayed by Napoleon himself. Personally the Emperor was not extravagant in his living, but the extravagance of his followers knew no bounds. In one of O’Meara’s letters to Mr. Finlaison—the statement will be sought in vain in his

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book—he calls them “except one or two, the greatest gluttons and epicures he ever saw,” and he goes on to describe their style of living. Each upper domestic was allowed a bottle of claret a day at the price of £6 per dozen, and the amount of wine consumed averaged two bottles a day per head for the whole establishment. The food was plentiful, but the quality sometimes left something to be desired. Colonel Jackson says, “provisions may not have been of the highest quality, though the best the island afforded.”\* That of course is the point, and Mr. Henry humorously complains of the inferior living that the 66th Regiment had to put up with. “The superior quality,” he says, “of everything used at Longwood at this time was notorious. The purveyor for that establishment found means always to monopolise the best meat; his daily cart conveying

\* *Waterloo and St. Helena*, p. 111.

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provisions to Longwood often underwent the envious scrutiny of our officers, as they met it in the course of their rides, when the peevish exclamation, ' We can't get anything like that for the mess,' was generally the result."<sup>\*</sup> We also find Dr. Baxter, the Deputy-Inspector of Hospitals at St. Helena, requesting the Governor to interfere "in the universal and sweeping monopoly of the contractors for Longwood," and complaining that he cannot get enough milk for the sick of the 53rd Regiment. On one occasion a complaint was made that not enough coals and wood was allowed. The Governor immediately ordered the allowance of coal to be doubled, the wood to remain the same, on account of the great scarcity of wood in the island. The next time they were out of wood the French servants broke up a bedstead and some shelves for the fires at Longwood,

<sup>\*</sup> Henry, ii. 54, note.

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pretending that they would not be allowed more wood. Napoleon approved of wood not being asked for, saying he could pay for it himself. The Governor remarked, on hearing of it, that this was always the way: they never would tell what they required, and then complained of the want of it. As to breaking up the plate, it was well known that Napoleon had plenty of ready money at his command, and that consequently this pretended sacrifice was made for the edification of the European public. O'Meara in a letter to Mr. Finlaison says of Napoleon, "In this he has also a wish to excite an odium against the Governor by saying that he has been obliged to sell his plate in order to provide against starvation, *as he himself told me was his object.*" Of a second sale of plate Montholon writes, "I was to persist in saying that his (Napoleon's) plate was his only resource at St. Helena; and I received

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the order to have all the plate broken up, with the exception of twelve covers," thus admitting in so many words that the scheme was one to impose on the public. But the pretence of ill-treatment was not always consistently kept up, and we find towards the end of the time various acknowledgments by Montholon of the trouble which was taken to supply them properly. Thus, in January 1820, he said to Major Gorrequer, in reply to a question on the subject of provisions, "We can only congratulate ourselves on the manner in which we are served."

(6) *That Napoleon was not allowed to have a regular supply of books and newspapers, and that what were sent were often detained altogether, or for some time, by Sir Hudson Lowe.* This has been an effective charge, and, if there is any gradation in falsehood, one of the falsest. As for books, one work by Mr. Hobhouse (afterwards Lord Broughton), sent by the author to



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Napoleon, was, it is true, detained by the Governor, because in one volume was written "Imperatorî Napoleon." It may have been good or bad judgment to detain the volumes, but the point is that in a note to Sir Hudson Lowe Mr. Hobhouse expressly authorised detention of them, "if it be thought improper to give them at all to the person for whom they are destined." This seems to be the only case in which a book was kept back. On the other hand, many hundreds of pounds' worth of books were sent by booksellers to Napoleon and received by him. With regard to newspapers, Count Montholon writes in his "Remonstrance," which was meant for European consumption only: "We are prohibited from receiving the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Morning Post*, or any French papers; occasionally a few odd numbers of the *Times* are sent to Longwood." To this the Governor replied, speaking in the

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third person: "General Bonaparte once sent a message to him requesting him to send him the *Morning Chronicle*, and he immediately sent the whole of those which he had then in his possession. No application was ever made to him to subscribe either to the *Morning Chronicle* or the *Morning Post*, or to any French journals. Had such an application been made he would have made the application known to his Government. It has not been odd numbers of the *Times* newspaper, but regular series of them, which have been constantly sent, the Governor never having kept back a single number. If any numbers were kept back it must have been done by his (Napoleon's) own followers, to whom they were always enclosed for him." O'Meara too says, in his *A Voice from St. Helena*, that very few newspapers were received, that "none except some unconnected numbers of the *Times*, *Courier*,

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*Observer*, &c., with a few straggling French papers of a very old date, reached Longwood during his residence there, except in one instance, when he was permitted to take the *Morning Chronicle* for some weeks as a great favour, which was not again repeated." \* And yet O'Meara had written to Sir Hudson Lowe on the previous June 20, in reply to inquiries of the Governor "to be informed of the names of such newspapers as General Bonaparte may have received." After giving the names of a good many English newspapers, he says: "*These, with the usual series of papers sent by yourself*, some French papers, and *Morning Chronicle* for October, November, and part of December, also sent by yourself, form the whole of the newspapers he has received." The truthful doctor thus disposes of himself. Yet this entry of March 28, 1818, is retained in the 1888 edition!

\* *A Voice from St. Helena*, ii. 397, under March 28, 1818.

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(7) *That Sir Hudson Lowe offered inducements to O'Meara to act as a spy, and on his refusal tried to ruin him.* This charge has been already dealt with by anticipation under the general account of O'Meara. We have also seen that the Governor abstained from putting questions to General Gourgaud about Longwood at a time when he might have obtained much information. I will add what Colonel Jackson says, to show how foreign it was to the honourable nature of Sir Hudson Lowe to expect such services: "It is incumbent on me in this place distinctly to declare that Sir Hudson Lowe never breathed a word to me having reference to surveillance; and I may also state that the great delicacy observed by him on that point first inspired in me the high respect for his character which I have never since ceased to feel up to the present moment." \*

\* *United Service Magazine*, March 1844, p. 418.

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Towards people in general who visited Longwood the Governor clearly states his attitude in a letter to Sir Pulteney Malcolm, the Admiral then on the station : “ When visitors did go I was not in the habit of troubling them with interrogations, and can boldly appeal to every person who has been admitted to visit at Longwood, or the Bertrands’, for the delicacy I have observed on this point. I should not, however, the less expect, if anything important for me to learn was said, that it should be made known to me. If I thought reserve practised I would not hesitate to question—considering that any conversation had with General Bonaparte, or the persons of his suite, which has relation to my duties on this island, or embraces any subject of *political interest*, ought as a matter of course to be communicated to me, as well from regard to the situation I fill here as to the confidence which Government has

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Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon reposed in me, being at the same time rendered by their instructions the responsible person for all conversations with him." This was an intelligible position for the Governor to maintain, and the more justifiable because of the refusal of Napoleon to hold personal intercourse with him.

(8) *That surreptitious bulletins were given to the Governor of Napoleon's health by a person who never saw him.* This charge is made by O'Meara,\* and is a good example of *suppressio veri*. The explanation is simple enough. "Nothing," says Mr. Forsyth, "could be more proper than that the Governor should endeavour to obtain a second opinion as to the health and medical treatment of Napoleon from a skilful professional person, who was competent to form a judgment upon O'Meara's medical details. In reality, however, the so-called 'fictitious bulletins' were merely

\* *A Voice from St. Helena*, ii. 398.

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repetitions of the information given by O'Meara to Mr. Baxter, and the writer rarely expressed any opinion of his own." Dr. Baxter was the principal medical officer on the island, and his services had been offered by Sir Hudson to Napoleon, who refused to see him, and at the same time intimated that he distrusted any medical man in the confidence of the Governor. Dr. Baxter himself wrote on the subject as follows: "The expressions of Mr. O'Meara were scrupulously attended to in making the report to the Governor, and for the truth of the statements made by me to the Governor from these examinations I pledge myself as a man of honour. In the preamble to the report it is explicitly stated to be the substance of an examination of Mr. O'Meara touching the state of health of Napoleon Bonaparte, and does in no way imply that I was in attendance upon him." It is difficult to

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see what there was "surreptitious" in this. No change, however, is made in the recent edition of O'Meara's book.

(9) *That Sir Hudson Lowe had thrown obstacles in the way of Napoleon receiving a marble bust of his son, the young Duc de Reichstadt, and had even suggested that it should be destroyed to prevent it from reaching Longwood.* O'Meara is the principal disseminator of this charge when he says: "The bust had been in the island for fourteen days, during several of which it was at Plantation House."\* I have purposely kept this charge to the last, as it is the one that would tell (and did tell) most of all upon the British public, and if there had been any truth in it the name of Sir Hudson Lowe would be deservedly branded as that of a man wanting in all delicacy of feeling and a stranger to the natural affections. But

\* *A Voice from St. Helena*, ii. 100, note.



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the charge is simply untrue. *The bust was landed on the 10th or 11th of June and sent to Longwood on the next day.* As so much has been made of this matter, Mr. Forsyth deals with it at some length, and supports all he says by documentary evidence printed at the end of his second volume. He writes as follows: "It is not quite clear how the bust was made, but at all events it was purchased by Messrs. Beaggini in London in hopes that a favourable opportunity might occur for transmitting it to St. Helena. It happened that a vessel, the *Baring*, commanded by Captain Lamb, was about to sail there in January 1817, on board of which was a foreign sailor named Rethwick or Radovitch, in the capacity of gunner, and to him Messrs. Beaggini confided the bust, with instructions that he was to endeavour to give it to Count Bertrand for Napoleon, and to make no stipulation for any pay-

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ment, but leave it to the generosity of 'the Emperor' to refund their expense. If, however, Bonaparte wished to know the price, he was to ask a hundred louis for the bust. Captain Lamb had no knowledge of the matter until shortly before or immediately after the arrival of his ship at St. Helena on May 28. At that time Rethwick was ill from a fit of apoplexy, which was succeeded by delirium, so that it was for several days impossible to speak to him on the subject. When Sir Thomas Reade was informed that the bust was on board, he immediately went to the Governor and acquainted him with the fact. Sir Hudson Lowe at first hesitated as to the course which his duty required him to take—considering the clandestine manner in which an attempt was thus made to communicate with Napoleon—and he was inclined not to allow the bust to be

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forwarded until he had communicated with Lord Bathurst on the subject. Sir Thomas Reade, however, suggested that, as the bust was made of marble and not plaster, so that it could not possibly contain anything improper, it might be forwarded to Longwood at once, and, as its arrival had already become known, Sir Hudson assented to the proposal. Before, however, ordering it to be sent on shore, he went on June 10 to Longwood to communicate with Count Bertrand and ascertain Napoleon's wishes. Major Gorrequer accompanied him, and he gives in his Minutes the following account of the interview:

‘The Governor called on Count Bertrand (whither I attended him), and informed him that in the storeship (the *Baring*) was a marble bust said to be that of the young Napoleon; that it appeared it was brought out by an under-officer of the ship; that, although it had come in a very irregular manner, yet, under the impression that

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it might be a thing acceptable '*à celui qui résidait à Longwood*,' he would take upon himself the responsibility of landing it, if such was his wish; that he requested Count Bertrand would make it known, and inform him if he wished to have it, and it would be brought on shore. He answered, '*Oh! sans doute, que ça lui fera plaisir; envoyez-le toujours.*' The Governor added, the man in whose charge it came was ill, in fact delirious, and it was impossible to speak to him on the subject. All he knew about it would be found in the two papers (one a letter, the other a memorandum) which he handed over to the Count, who read them (they were in Italian) and returned them. After leaving the house, the Governor went back (I following), and again gave the two papers to the Count, that he might show them to General Bonaparte, begging he afterwards would return them to him, and told Count Bertrand he would have the bust landed the following day.'

"The next day the bust was landed and sent up to Longwood, when Bonaparte received it with evident satisfaction and delight. He had, however, been informed of its arrival (how it does not appear)

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some days previously. On the 10th he had said to O'Meara : ' I have known of it for several days. I intended, if it had not been given, to have made such a complaint as would have caused every Englishman's hair to stand on end with horror. I would have told a tale which would have made the mothers of England execrate him as a monster in human shape.' No one can doubt this, for there was no lack of willingness or of ability for the purpose ; but unfortunately for the well-conceived plot of the story the Governor did not give him the opportunity. But Napoleon persisted in believing, or affecting to believe, that the latter had originally given orders for the destruction of the bust, telling O'Meara, who endeavoured to convince him of the contrary, 'that it was in vain to attempt to deny a known fact'; and upon this imaginary hypothesis he broke out into a violent tirade against Sir

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Hudson Lowe, calling him barbarous and atrocious. 'That countenance,' he exclaimed, gazing at the marble image of his son, 'would melt the heart of the most ferocious wild beast. The man who gave orders to break that image would plunge a knife into the heart of the original if it were in his power.'"\* Subsequently Count Bertrand had an interview with Captain Lamb, and asked him whether the Governor had not intended to keep back the bust altogether, and whether he had not spoken of breaking it to pieces. To this Captain Lamb very properly replied that if Sir Hudson Lowe had intended to keep it back he need only have mentioned his wish to him, when of course it would not have been landed. The sailor who brought it received a cheque for £300 from the Emperor. Of him O'Meara says: "By means of some

\* Forsyth, ii. 146-149.

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unworthy tricks the poor man did not receive the money for nearly two years.” The fact is, however, that the man turned out to be a great scamp. He received the money and would not return any of it to Messrs. Beaggini, who, about a year and eight months afterwards, wrote to Count Bertrand to inform him of the conduct of Radovitch, and to solicit some remuneration for themselves. It will hardly be believed that this atrocious charge against Sir Hudson Lowe is retained unaltered in the 1888 edition of O’Meara’s book, in spite of the exposure of its falsehood by Mr. Forsyth. At a later period Sir Hudson Lowe received a despatch from Lord Bathurst containing the Prince Regent’s approval of his conduct in sending to Napoleon the bust of his son. But Lord Bathurst added : “ The suspicious circumstances, however, under which it arrived at St. Helena, as detailed

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in your despatch, were sufficient to make you pause before you determined to transmit it to the General. Had the package contained anything less interesting to him in his private character as a father, the clandestine manner in which it appears to have been introduced on board the vessel would have been a sufficient reason for withholding the delivery of it, at least for a much longer period." The Government therefore not only approved of Sir Hudson Lowe's conduct in this matter, but evidently considered that he needed a slight warning against showing too much leniency.

The chief specific charges against Sir Hudson Lowe have now been stated, and it is time to look a little at the other side of the picture, to show not merely that he was not guilty of any of the atrocities of which he had been so recklessly accused, but that he was a man remarkable for



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delicacy, generosity, and humanity. To his delicacy Mr. Henry bears witness in the following striking passage :

“ It is extremely probable, and I believe it to be a fact, that Sir Hudson Lowe went to St. Helena determined to conduct himself with courtesy and kindness to Napoleon, and to afford him as many comforts and as much personal freedom as were consistent with his safe custody. I was intimately acquainted with the officer charged with the care of Longwood for nearly three years, and he assured me that the Governor repeatedly desired him to consult the comfort of the great man and his suite, to attend to their suggestions, and to make their residence as agreeable as possible. Two of the orderly officers at Longwood, namely, Majors Blakeney and Nicholls of the 66th Regiment, have given me the same assurance. I have myself seen courteous notes from Sir Hudson Lowe to these officers, accompanying pheasants and other delicacies sent from Plantation House for Napoleon's table. Even after two unfortunate interviews, when the Emperor worked himself into a rage and used gross and insulting expressions to the Governor, evidently to put

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him into a passion, but without success (for Sir Hudson maintained perfect self-possession and self-command throughout), even after this open breach the above civilities were not discontinued. Still, when a pheasant, the greatest rarity in the island, appeared on the Governor's table, one was sure to be sent to Longwood."\*

A little further on the same writer says :

"During my residence at St. Helena opportunities of observing minutely the character of Sir Hudson Lowe were not wanting, and I believe nobody could fill all the ordinary relations of domestic life and of society better than this much calumniated man. He was to my certain knowledge a kind husband and father, and I believe an excellent magistrate and civil governor."

I have mentioned acts of courtesy on the part of Sir Hudson Lowe to Countess Bertrand. There was no reason to complain of her demeanour or of that of Countess Montholon during their stay at St. Helena. Countess Bertrand was a

\* Henry, ii. 57.

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lady of much spirit and wit. Mr. Henry frequently lets us see how highly he thought of her. One of her witty remarks is preserved amid the constant tale of bickering. She was confined in January 1817, and some days afterwards, when Napoleon paid her a visit, she said to him : “ Sire, I have the honour to present to your Majesty *le premier Français* who, since your arrival, has entered Longwood without Lord Bathurst’s permission.” The child was named after the Emperors of Austria and Russia and the Duke of Wellington. When a letter arrived announcing the death of the Countess’s mother, Sir Hudson Lowe sent it with a note to Count Bertrand from himself, so that the news might be broken gently to her. No one could have acted with more delicacy ; yet because, nearly a year afterwards, the Countess received a letter brought by a person who came out as

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governess to her children, speaking of the death of her mother as a long past event, he is, under the head of "Brutal conduct of Sir Hudson Lowe to the Countess Bertrand," accused by O'Meara of little less than a design upon her life in having suffered the letter to reach her !\* Again, when a newspaper arrived which contained an announcement that Count Bertrand had been condemned *par contumace* for high treason, Sir Hudson Lowe caused the paper to be sent separately to the Count with a private note, for fear the news might first meet the eye of the Countess. At another time, when a newspaper mentioned the death of one of Count Montholon's children, the Governor enclosed the paper with a note to the Abbé Buonavita, whom he con-

\* O'Meara's *Exposition*, pp. 152, 153. This was a publication sent out by O'Meara to St. Helena in 1819: a sort of skeleton outline, afterwards filled out to the proportions of *A Voice from St. Helena*.

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sidered the proper person to break the information to Count Montholon. These are indeed remarkable instances of coarse-mindedness and brutality on the Governor's part! Let it be noticed also how some of his civilities were received. Early in July 1817 there arrived at St. Helena a beautiful set of chessmen, two workboxes, and some other articles of Chinese manufacture as a present to Napoleon from the Hon. John Elphinstone, as a mark of gratitude to the Emperor for having saved the life of his brother, Captain Elphinstone, who was severely wounded and made prisoner on the day before Waterloo. Mr. Forsyth thus writes: "The letter that accompanied them was immediately forwarded to Longwood, with an intimation that the articles would follow. On examining them it was discovered that the presents were marked with eagles and the initial N., surmounted by the Imperial crown, a recognition or

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allusion to his former rank which rendered them under the regulations inadmissible. Sir Hudson Lowe, however, did not enforce the rules, and transmitted the articles ; but he thought it right to advert to the irregularity, and wrote to Bertrand, saying that if he were to act in strict conformity with the established rules he ought to delay sending them ; but that, as he had promised that the boxes should follow the letter, he had no alternative but to forward them." Bertrand replied angrily that the Emperor would not accept favours from anybody, nor be indebted for anything to the caprice of any one, but that he claimed to be made acquainted with the restrictions imposed upon him." Sir Hudson answered : " I have not the pretension to bestow a favour on General Bonaparte, and still less the arrogance of subjecting him to any act of my caprice. He is under no restriction which my Government does

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not know, and which all the world may not know." Some time afterwards Lord Bathurst wrote to Sir Hudson Lowe that the Government, while approving of the Governor's having forwarded the presents to Napoleon under the circumstances, yet "in case of any present being hereafter forwarded to General Bonaparte to which emblems or titles of sovereignty are annexed, you are to consider that circumstance as altogether precluding its delivery, if they cannot be removed without prejudice to the present itself." It may be granted that this attitude is undignified and altogether unworthy of the British Government ; but, as before remarked, the point to insist on is that Sir Hudson Lowe used his power to mitigate harshness and not to aggravate it. We come across another of O'Meara's misstatements in connexion with these very presents. He says that Captain Haviside, who brought

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them from China, "on having obtained permission to visit Longwood soon after his arrival, was ordered by the Governor to maintain a strict silence on the subject to all the French."\* Years afterwards, on reading the passage in O'Meara's book, Captain Haviside spontaneously wrote to Sir Hudson Lowe, saying he trusted Sir Hudson would do him the honour to believe that he was not the author of this misrepresentation, that he had had every facility given him for visiting Longwood, and that he conversed some time with Count and Countess Bertrand on the subject of the presents. And yet the misrepresentation is repeated in the recent edition of O'Meara, no notice whatever being taken of Captain Haviside's contradiction! Soon after his arrival at St. Helena Sir Hudson Lowe sent up some fowling-pieces to Longwood. This was

\* *A Voice from St. Helena*, ii. 118.



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resented as an insult, on the ground that the parts of the island where game could be shot were outside the precincts of Longwood ; and yet at another time the servant Santini boasted that he supplied the table with the game he shot, when it was wished to make out that they were short of provisions ! A writer in the *Leisure Hour* shall give another instance : “ A wish on one occasion was expressed for a set of dining-tables. Immediately, as in every instance of the kind, no labour attainable on the island, and indeed no expense, was spared in order as expeditiously as possible to meet the requirements, and in a very short time a handsome mahogany set made its appearance at Longwood. When seeing it, one of the Emperor’s most distinguished attendants gave orders for its removal, observing at the same time that it was not at all the thing the Emperor

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desired ; he wished for a plain deal table. Promptly, as before, was this wish also met, and a deal table accordingly was placed by direction in one of the dining-rooms at Longwood. On one occasion some visitors were conducted over several of the apartments, not excepting the dining-room referred to, with the deal table. The strangers, beholding the Emperor's humble dining-table, as intimated to them by their polite attendant with an expressive shrug, were at once overwhelmed with amazement and the deepest sympathy."\* On their return to England, these people, with the best intentions, naturally gave this as an instance of the affronts and privations endured by the illustrious exile. Sir Hudson Lowe sent some excellent coffee to Longwood, thinking it would be an acceptable present. And so it was considered by Napoleon ;

\* *Leisure Hour*, October 1, 1870, "Recollections of St. Helena."

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but Count Montholon called it "an inexplicable idea of performing an act of politeness," and hesitated to convey the message about it to Napoleon, who, however, said to his astonishment : "Cause the case to be carried to the pantry ; good coffee is a precious thing in this horrible place." Cipriani, the *maître-d'hôtel*, suspected that the coffee might be *poisoned* ! Montholon adds, "in fact, the coffee was excellent." During the February of 1821 (about two months before his death) Napoleon was attacked with constant sickness, and had great difficulty in keeping any food upon his stomach. Meat jelly made of veal was what he most easily retained, and when this was discovered some was immediately sent for his use from Plantation House, and a cook was also despatched by the Governor to Longwood who made excellent soup, of which Napoleon partook with much en-

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joyment. Count Montholon told Captain Lutyens (the orderly officer) "it was so good the d——d doctor would not let the Emperor eat much of it." We read also of the Governor sending books from his own library of the kind which Napoleon said he wanted, and he desired his secretary to make it known that he would attend to any further suggestions on the same subject. But perhaps enough has been said of the peculiar "brutality" of Sir Hudson Lowe. His generosity towards General Gourgaud has already been mentioned. Another striking instance is supplied by Mr. Henry, who says:

"When about to quit St. Helena, some of the foreigners were found to be considerably in debt to the shopkeepers in James Town, and one of the highest rank among them owed no less a sum than between nine hundred and a thousand pounds. Payment being delayed, legal measures were threatened, and all was consternation at Longwood. In this dilemma application was

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made to the Governor, who handsomely offered to guarantee payment of the debt, thus removing the principal difficulty in the way of their embarkation. I have heard that the amount was paid soon after their arrival in Europe, and I should expect nothing else from the high character of the distinguished debtor. This generous behaviour of the Governor, together with other acts of kindness to the exiles, after Napoleon's death, notwithstanding the abuse they had all publicly and privately showered upon his character, prove that Sir Hudson Lowe was a very different man from what he was represented by his enemies at the time, and what the world still believes him to be."\*

Many years later one of the atrocious calumnies circulated against Sir Hudson Lowe was this: A paragraph appeared in a London paper stating (as a quotation from the *National*) that military executions were more frequent in Sicily than they had been since the time that Sir Hudson Lowe held an appointment there. Sir Hudson Lowe wrote to the editor as

\* Henry, ii. 87.

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follows: "I feel impelled to address this note to you to desire it may be understood that I never was employed as British Agent at the Neapolitan Court, and that I utterly deny the existence of a single circumstance of any description or import which can justify any person in presuming to couple my name with military trials or executions in Sicily or any other quarter of the globe." And yet, after all, Sir Hudson Lowe's name had been connected with military executions in Calabria. But how? In an attempt to put a stop to them, as has already been mentioned, when he wrote to General Berthier thirty years earlier. Does not this well illustrate Sir Hudson's own remark that whatever kindness he "was guilty of" was turned against him?

His humanity was shown on a larger scale by a measure which has attracted little attention, but which links the name of Sir Hudson Lowe most honourably with

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the island of St. Helena. In 1818 he obtained the consent of the slave proprietors, not without some difficulty, to abolish slavery without receiving any compensation. It was resolved at a meeting of the chief proprietors, "that from and after the 25th December next ensuing all children born of slaves shall be considered free." Thus the abolition was unattended with expense, and the mischief of sudden emancipation avoided. Sir Hudson Lowe's skill and management on this occasion were highly appreciated by the East India Company, who thus cleared all their possessions from this institution. In reference to this measure at St. Helena, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton is reported as having spoken as follows in the House of Commons on the May 15, 1823 :

"The extinction of slavery which he declared to be his object was to be effected by ordaining that all negro children born after a certain day

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should be free. Now, he would put it to his opponents, where did they find this in their view necessarily noisy [*sic*; *qy.* noxious] principle at work? It is in full operation at this time at St. Helena. Public curiosity has recently been excited in an extraordinary degree. Books enough have been written to fill a library detailing the administration of Sir Hudson Lowe. Acts the most slight, anecdotes the most trivial, expressions the most unmeaning have been recorded with exact fidelity. Generations not yet born shall know that on such a day in July Sir Hudson Lowe pronounced that the weather was warm, and that on such a day in the following December Bonaparte offered a conjecture that it would rain in the course of a week. Nothing has escaped the researches of the historian. Nothing has been overlooked by the curiosity of the public. *Nothing?* Yes, one thing has never been noticed. It has never been noticed that Sir Hudson Lowe gave the deathblow to slavery on that island."

Napoleon died on the evening of May 5, 1821. On that day the Governor went early to Longwood, stayed there the whole day, and did not return until all was



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over. Mr. Henry gives an interesting account of what followed :

“The important event of the day was naturally the chief topic of conversation in the evening, as Sir Hudson took a hurried dinner, previous to writing his despatches ; and, in bare justice to an ill-used man, I can testify that, notwithstanding the bitter passages between the great departed and himself, the Governor spoke of him in a feeling, respectful and most proper manner. Major Gorrequer (the Military Secretary), Sir Hudson and myself, walked for a short time before the door of Plantation House, conversing on the character of the deceased. One of us remarked that he was the greatest enemy England ever had. ‘Well, gentlemen,’ said the Governor, ‘he was England’s greatest enemy, and mine too, but I forgive him everything. On the death of a great man like him, we should only feel deep concern and regret.’” \*

On the next day Sir Hudson Lowe wrote to Lady Holland : “The compassionate interest which your Ladyship has so constantly and in so generous a manner

\* Henry ii. 80.

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Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon shown towards the remarkable person who has been so long under my care, impresses it as a duty on me to take the earliest opportunity of informing you that he breathed his last yesterday evening at about ten minutes before six o'clock."

On the death of Napoleon the whole importance of Sir Hudson Lowe's employment vanished. The unpopularity of having been charged with that employment alone awaited him.

## CHAPTER IV

### AFTER ST. HELENA

SIR HUDSON LOWE left St. Helena at the end of July. Before his arrival in England Lord Bathurst had written a despatch conveying to him the King's marked approbation of his conduct during the whole period of his government at St. Helena. Sir Hudson Lowe was presented to the King on November 14; and, when he was about to kiss His Majesty's hand, the King took hold of his and shook it heartily, saying: "I congratulate you most sincerely upon your return, after a trial the most arduous and exemplary that perhaps any man ever had. I have felt for your situa-

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tion, and may appeal to Lord Bathurst how frequently I have talked to him about you." Soon afterwards he was appointed to the first vacant colonelcy of a regiment (the 93rd) that occurred after his return to England.

But evil days were at hand. In July 1822 came out O'Meara's *A Voice from St. Helena*, and the sensation it produced is well described by Sir Hudson Lowe himself. "Public curiosity flew with eagerness to the repast; nothing was wanting to satisfy the cravings of the most credulous, the most inquisitive, or the most malignant mind. The highest authorities were not spared; but *I* was destined to be the real victim, upon whom the public indignation was to fall."

Upon this Sir Hudson Lowe resolved to have recourse to the law for redress, and the result was an application to the Court of King's Bench for a criminal infor-

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mation against O'Meara. Much time was consumed in selecting the most libellous passages from the book. The difficulty of this task was great, owing to the peculiar art with which it was composed and the studied care taken to avoid any direct accusation in points where any living testimony could be referred to. Time was, however, of the last importance, although Sir Hudson was not aware of it. It was not until the latter end of Hilary Term, 1823—*i.e.*, towards the end of the second term after the publication of the libel—that a rule *nisi* was applied for, and then it was hinted by the Lord Chief Justice that the application was likely to be fruitless, simply on the technical ground that it was too late. And so it proved, for when O'Meara's counsel showed cause against the rule being made absolute, he urged the fatal objection that it was out of time, without attempting to enter into the merits, and

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this objection was upheld. It is certainly very strange that the eminent counsel who advised Sir Hudson Lowe should not have informed him of this risk. Sir Hudson next consulted his legal advisers as to the expediency of indicting O'Meara, or of bringing an action for damages; but his counsel (Mr. Tindal) said with perfect truth that the proper legal remedy had been already resorted to for the vindication of his character. He had cleared himself from every charge upon his oath, and if O'Meara challenged the truth of his denials he might test them by prosecuting Sir Hudson Lowe for perjury. But to assume that a man's character is cleared in any way by the refusal of a libeller to go on to prosecute for perjury is a notion that would occur to no one but a lawyer. It leaves the game entirely in the libeller's hands. An indictment, however, would not put in issue the truth or falsehood of the accusations

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contained in the libel, for Lord Campbell's Act was not then in existence. As to a civil action, it would be useless to incur the risk of obtaining only small damages, which would in reality be a triumph for the defendant. In fact, Sir Hudson Lowe's legal remedy was gone owing to the fatal delay. There was only one course now to be pursued, and another fatal mistake was made in not pursuing it. Sir Hudson Lowe should at once have vindicated his character by the publication of a complete account of his Governorship, for which he had the amplest materials, and the result could not have failed to redound to his public credit. Lord Bathurst, who was always his friend, strongly urged Sir Hudson Lowe to take this obvious course, and offered to place all the state documents at his disposal. His continued silence could not fail to impress the public unfavourably. However innocent a man may be, he cannot allow the foulest

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charges to be brought against him and expect no one will believe them. In Jupiter or Saturn things may be arranged differently, but here the world judges, rightly or wrongly, that a man who does nothing to vindicate his character, when it has been publicly aspersed, does not do so because he cannot do so ; and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the world's judgment is correct. But Sir Hudson Lowe's happened to be the hundredth case, and it cannot be denied that his failure to do what his position demanded brought on himself a penalty which he kept on suffering to the end of his life, and from which his memory still suffers. We cannot be surprised that Sir Hudson Lowe's enemies made the most of his unaccountable silence. It is therefore most material to consider why he did not follow the advice of Lord Bathurst and the rest of his friends. A man may, it is true, despise the opinion of the world and



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take no heed of calumny, either because he has a contempt for his fellow-creatures or from a motive of religion. But Sir Hudson Lowe was neither a cynic nor a saint. He lived for this world, and promotion in his profession naturally depended to a large extent on his retaining the good opinion of the world. To complain of calumnies, and yet to neglect the only steps by which they can be abated, shows a certain amount of wrong-headedness, for which it is difficult to account completely. However, some of the reasons by which the ex-Governor was actuated in refusing to make an appeal to public opinion may be conjectured. The scruples that stood in his way are all those of a high-minded man, but they do more honour to his heart than to his head. First, then, Sir Hudson Lowe despised his enemies, more especially O'Meara. That individual was certainly worthy of all the contempt which the ex-

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Governor felt for him ; but then the public did not know what Sir Hudson knew, and it is simply a blunder to despise an adversary who assumes to bring forward *facts* and not merely his own *opinions*. Such alleged facts, by whomsoever stated, must be shown to be untrue. The consciousness of having honourably discharged a difficult duty does not, as Mr. Forsyth well remarks, “inspire enthusiasm in others, or cause friends to cluster round the object of calumny and reproach.” Secondly, Sir Hudson Lowe thought that, as his conduct had been heartily approved by the King and Government, it was rather for the latter than for himself to undertake his defence. But surely this was expecting too much. A body of men like a Government can never act with the generosity of an individual. They have seldom time or inclination to vindicate the character of a servant, unless their own stability is so

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much bound up with that servant as to make his defence practically the same as their own. This was not the case here. It would not be too much to say that the opposite of this was the case. If a Government cannot be as generous as an individual, it can, as a body, act with a meanness of which most individuals would be ashamed, and at this time the Government by sacrificing Sir Hudson Lowe strengthened their own position, and to a large extent took the wind from the sails of the Opposition. When they were attacked for their ill-treatment of Napoleon they could tacitly transfer the odium of it to Sir Hudson Lowe, for Mr. Forsyth puts it too mildly when he says: "The Government ought to have aided Sir Hudson Lowe more heartily and effectually than they did." In the third place, and probably this weighed most of all with the chivalrous nature of Sir Hudson, who was intensely loyal to his King and

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country, he clearly perceived that he could not thoroughly defend himself without disclosing the shabby manner in which he had been treated by the Government during his term of office at St. Helena. He knew that O'Meara's correspondence had been encouraged by Cabinet Ministers, and that intrigues behind his back had, to say the least, not been discouraged. But I have already dealt with this topic, and need not repeat my words. It is evident that Sir Hudson Lowe acutely felt the delicacy of his position. But surely all his scruples should have been set at rest by the strongly-urged advice of Lord Bathurst to publish—Lord Bathurst, who was himself one of the principal members of the Cabinet, and who knew more about St. Helena than all the rest.

As a matter of fact, after the return of Sir Hudson Lowe nothing was ever done for him by the Government at all adequate to his merits. He certainly received from

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them plenty of empty praise, but *probitas laudatur et alget* ("honour is praised and—left out in the cold"), for, while those who had served under him at St. Helena were promoted on *his* recommendation, nothing was done for himself. Before he ever went to St. Helena he had been formally assured that Lord Liverpool had said that, if he went, "it should not stop there." Sir Hudson Lowe was then advised by a friend of some experience to stipulate for a pension before he went out, but he did not follow the suggestion. He felt too confident of the principles upon which he should discharge the duty intrusted to him not to be assured that recompense must follow. The employment was therefore accepted unconditionally and without his seeking to establish any condition.\* Colonel Wilks,

\* See "Memoir," *United Service Magazine*, June 1844 p. 290.

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his predecessor at St. Helena, was in receipt of a pension of £1500. Sir Hudson Lowe had no pension given to him. It is said that Lord Liverpool was prejudiced against him. The calumnies of O'Meara may indeed have had this effect. The writer of Sir Hudson Lowe's life in the *Dictionary of National Biography* says: "The amount of his salary (£12,000 a year) was specially fixed, and no stipulation was made as to pension, which explains the fact, upon which his enemies remarked, that he was not afterwards considered eligible for a pension." But surely this must be an error, or Sir Hudson Lowe would not so persistently have urged his claim to a pension, and we never find that the obvious reply that he was not eligible for one was made, but only that if it was submitted to the House of Commons they would not grant it. The Government no doubt must have

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felt that they had not treated Sir Hudson Lowe fairly, and when the storm burst upon his head they were not inclined to help him, for the vigorous lines of Dryden are ever true :

“ Forgiveness to the injured doth belong,  
But they ne’er pardon who have done the wrong.”

Another disadvantage under which Sir Hudson Lowe laboured was that he knew so few people in England at the time. All his active military life, previous to his departure for St. Helena, had been spent in Continental service, and most of the friends he then made were now dead. Lord Bathurst offered him in 1824 the government of the island of Antigua (a post ridiculously below his merits), but family reasons prevented him from accepting it. He was in the following year appointed to the command of the forces in Ceylon with a promise of the reversion of the Governorship. Again ill-luck followed

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him. The Governorship fell vacant near the end of 1830, a very short time after Earl Grey had become Prime Minister. All hope of public employment was now over for the time, for, as Mr. Forsyth remarks, "neither Earl Grey nor his colleagues could be expected to sympathise much with the former guardian of Napoleon's person, of whom it had been so long the fashion of their party to speak as the inhuman jailer of an injured prisoner."

Sir Hudson Lowe's military command in Ceylon terminated with his promotion to the rank of Lieutenant-General in 1830 (in St. Helena he held this only as a local rank), and after his return to England in 1831 he was incessantly occupied in petitioning—one might almost say pestering—the Government for some office in recognition of his services, not merely on account of his private means, which had become



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much reduced, but also as some answer to the calumnies against him so industriously circulated. But calumny and uncontradicted lies had at last done their natural work. Some of the mud so copiously thrown had stuck, and stuck effectually. In a memorial drawn up in 1843 Sir Hudson Lowe writes, after alluding to the state of inactivity in which he had been kept for twelve years: "The government of the island of Ceylon had thrice fallen vacant, and the chief authority in the Ionian Islands (where my local services at their liberation and in the discharge of *civil* and military duties subsequently had contributed to form a strong claim for re-employment) four times, during the period of which I have been speaking. Vacancies had also arisen in other stations. But on none of these occasions were either my local or general services, or any claim arising from past

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disappointment, taken into that consideration which I should have hoped might have been deemed to be their due." But it was not all gloom. Even the malice of his foes gave occasion to the championship of friends who were above the influence of party spirit. In 1833 Lord Teynham made an attack on Sir Hudson Lowe in the House of Lords. Speaking of the government of Ireland, he said, in reference to a proposal to intrust special powers to the Lord-Lieutenant (the Marquis of Normanby): "Now suppose the noble Marquis were to be succeeded in the government of Ireland by a Sir Hudson Lowe." Here he was called to order, and when he had sat down the Duke of Wellington rose, and asking what the noble Lord meant, said: "I have the honour to know Sir Hudson Lowe, and I will say, in this House or elsewhere, wherever it may be, that there

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is not in the army a more respectable officer than Sir Hudson Lowe, nor has His Majesty a more faithful subject." A day or two afterwards Lord Teynham made an abject apology, and in reply to a letter of thanks from Sir Hudson Lowe to the Duke for his prompt and generous defence, the latter wrote as follows :

"STRATHFIELDSAYE, *Feb.* 21, 1833.

"MY DEAR GENERAL,—I have received your letter of the 20th. I assure you that I considered that I did no more than my duty upon the occasion to which you refer in repelling a very gross and marked insinuation against an officer, in his absence, for whom I entertained the highest respect and regard. The discussion ended in a way that must be highly satisfactory to all your friends.—Ever, my dear General, yours most faithfully,

WELLINGTON.

"Lieut.-General Sir Hudson Lowe."

In 1842 Sir Hudson Lowe was much gratified by his transfer from the colonelcy of the 56th to that of his old regiment, the 50th, the regiment in which he had first

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received a commission. In the same year the King of Prussia advanced him to the First Class of the Red Eagle of Prussia, notified in a flattering letter from Baron von Bülow, who recalled his "signal services to the common cause in the glorious campaigns of 1813-14."\* He was also made a G.C.M.G., an order which at that time was confined to those who had rendered service in connexion with Malta or the Ionian Islands. We have already said that none of the French exiles bore any ill-will towards Sir Hudson Lowe except the Las Cases, father and son. One day in November 1822, young Las Cases, who was then in London, assaulted Sir Hudson Lowe in the street, and afterwards sent him a challenge, which Sir Hudson had the good sense and moral courage to treat with the contempt it deserved. Another extraordinary inci-

\* *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xxxiv. p. 193.

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dent connected with the same individual occurred in 1825. Sir Hudson Lowe, as may be gathered from what is already written, was a man of the highest physical as well as moral courage. Thus, in April 1814, when he made a journey to England to announce the fall of Paris (a service which Lord Cathcart regarded as perilous in the extreme) he rode from Paris to Calais attended by a single Cossack. So again in 1825, when on his way to Ceylon, disregarding the advice of friends, he determined to pass through Paris. It seems that while Sir Hudson was approaching Paris in his carriage young Las Cases was found wounded near a spot by which Sir Hudson passed, and it was reported that an attempt had been made by Sir Hudson Lowe to assassinate him! The *Times* commented upon the rumour as follows: "Our readers will see in our French letter a curious

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result drawn from the supposed attempt to assassinate young Las Cases. Sir Hudson Lowe, lately at Paris, and now on his way home,\* is charged with that attempt. We expected that such would be the case; and it was by mere chance that we did not make an observation to that effect when we inserted the paragraph with the rumour of the assassination. We have not the least doubt but that the whole is a plot against Sir Hudson. Some people will say that he might as well have kept away from Paris, unless he had urgent business there; others, that he did right to show himself, in the consciousness of an innocent heart and the pride of having done his duty. We shall not decide upon this point. We thought that the journey to Paris exposed Sir Hudson to some risk,

\* This was a mistake. He was on his way to Ceylon at this time.

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without knowing of what kind the risk might be. The moment we heard the assassination story, we saw in what way the Bonapartists were going to work.”\*

The hoax was rather too palpable, and nothing more was heard of it. On the same journey Sir Hudson Lowe gave a conspicuous example of his generosity. While he was at Smyrna, and dining on board H.M.S. *Cambrian* with Captain Hamilton, the Secretary of the French Consul proceeded to Sir Hudson Lowe's lodgings with the avowed intention of assassinating him. Not finding him in, this worthy destroyed some of Sir Hudson's property, and prepared to lie in wait for his return, calling upon a friend to be “witness of the revenge he was about to take on the murderer and poisoner of Napoleon.” From doing this, however,

\* *Times*, November 19, 1825.

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he was prevented, and the matter becoming known, the French Consul dismissed the man from his employment. Sir Hudson Lowe, on receiving an assurance that he should be no further molested, and learning that his would-be assailant had a large family dependent upon him for support, wrote that "he had no desire to take any further steps in the affair, or to stand in the way of any act of lenity or consideration which the French Consul himself might think fit to show towards him." \* Such then was the vindictive spirit exhibited by the "murderer and poisoner" of Napoleon.

It is pleasing to record, on the authority of his eldest son, that in spite of all his troubles Sir Hudson Lowe was never depressed. "This frame of mind appeared to be one of which he was always incapable. Up to his final seizure

\* From an unpublished letter.



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with paralysis he had always abundant animal spirits. To say that he retained his activity of mind and body and his industry to the last would be inappropriate, as they may be rather considered as having been too great for his strength." \* Most men would have become embittered or morose under the long persecution of which Sir Hudson Lowe was the victim. He died in January 1844 in comparative poverty. Sir Robert Peel recommended Miss Lowe, his unmarried daughter, to the Queen for a small pension which at the time was at his disposal, "in recognition of the services of her father." This lady still survives to cherish the memory of a father whose domestic virtues have never been questioned by his bitterest assailants.

Such, then, was the career of Sir

\* "Memoir," *United Service Magazine*, June 1844, p. 294.

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Hudson Lowe, a man of unstained honour, of undaunted courage, of unflinching resolution. He was as much devoted to duty as the Duke of Wellington. With the latter "the path of duty was the way to glory." With Sir Hudson Lowe this was not the case; but, after all, there may be better things than "glory." Sir Hudson Lowe has been the most calumniated man of this—perhaps of any—century. He has been charged with giving way to ungovernable bursts of temper; Napoleon complained that he could not make him lose his temper. He has been charged with want of courtesy; all Napoleon could say against him was that on one occasion, after being assailed with a torrent of abuse, he actually forgot himself so far as to retire rather abruptly and without the customary bow! He has been charged with want of delicacy; if he had been less delicate he would have

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vindicated himself with more success. He has been charged with brutality and harshness in the discharge of his duty; the only official hint of disapproval that he ever received from the Government was on account of his leniency. It is said there was persecution at St. Helena; it is true, but Sir Hudson Lowe was the victim of it, not Napoleon. The following words of a military writer contain no exaggeration :

“To have been charged with an amount of responsibility from which most men would have shrunk aghast ; to have performed a painful duty with sleepless vigilance ; to have been exposed from circumstances not of his own seeking to an amount of obloquy almost without parallel in the annals of party ; to have firmly carried out what he had reluctantly undertaken—the safe custody of a baffled tyrant ; to have ‘obeyed instructions,’ and then to have been rewarded by coolness and neglect when he might have expected cordiality and praise, seems a hard destiny. It was that of Sir Hudson Lowe.”

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It is to the honour of England that the truth of this miserable affair should be known, and the more widely it is known the more will it become recognised that Englishmen have no cause to be ashamed of the conduct of Sir Hudson Lowe at St. Helena.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1815. Oct. 15. Arrival of Rear-Admiral Sir George Cockburn on board the *Northumberland*, conveying Napoleon and his suite, including the surgeon, O'Meara.
1816. April 14. Arrival of Sir Hudson Lowe and suite.
- „ 16. First interview between Napoleon and Sir Hudson Lowe.
- „ 30. Second interview.
- May 17. Third interview.
- June 17. Arrival of Rear-Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm on board the *Newcastle* frigate, to succeed Sir George Cockburn in command of the naval station at St. Helena ; also of the three foreign Commissioners.
- July 17. Fourth interview.

## Chronological Table

- |       |       |     |                                     |
|-------|-------|-----|-------------------------------------|
| 1816. | Aug.  | 18. | Fifth and last interview.           |
|       | Dec.  | 30. | Departure of Las Cases and his son. |
| 1818. | March | 14. | Departure of General Gourgaud.      |
|       | Aug.  | 2.  | Departure of O'Meara.               |
| 1821. | May   | 5.  | Death of Napoleon.                  |
|       | July  | 25. | Departure of Sir Hudson Lowe.       |

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